

# St. Joseph's College Child Protection Policy



Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chair of B.O.G.)

Review Date:

## **CHILD PROTECTION ETHOS**

We in St. Joseph's College have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school

## **PRINCIPLES**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools -a Guide for Schools' (DENI Circular 2017/04) and the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy.

- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- In any incident the child's welfare must be paramount, this overrides all other considerations.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first.

## **OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES**

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Attendance policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Special Educational Needs
- Educational Visits
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationship and Sexuality Education
- E-Safety Policy
- Intimate Care
- Staff Code of Conduct

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing a copy should contact the School Principal.

### **SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

The following are members of the schools Safeguarding team

- Chair of the Board of Governors: Fr Raymond Donnelly
- Designated Governor for Child Protection: Mr John Bennett
- Principal: Mrs Helena Palmer
- Designated Teacher: Mrs Cara Lynch
- Deputy Designated Teacher: Mrs Rhona Soffe

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Responsibilities of board of governors

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
- Have a written child protection policy
- Specifically address the prevention of bullying in school behaviour management policies

### **The Chair of the Board of Governors**

The Chair of the Board of Governors must:

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment
- Ensure that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy

- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment & selection training provided by the EA Western Region Child Protection Support Service for Schools, the EA Governor Support and Human Resource departments.
- Ensure that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal.
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive termly updates and a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity.

### **The Designated Governor for Child Protection**

The Designated Governor will provide the child protection lead in order to advise the Governors on:

- The role of the designated teachers
- The content of child protection policies
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school
- The content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report
- Recruitment, selection and vetting of staff

### **The Principal**

The Principal must ensure that: -

- DENI 2017/04 is implemented within the school
- That a designated teacher and deputy are appointed
- That all staff receive child protection training
- That all necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- That the Chairman of the Board of Governors (and the Board of Governors) is kept informed
- That child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors meetings (termly updates & annual report)
- That the school child protection policy is reviewed annually and that parents and students receive a copy of this policy at least once every 2 years.
- That confidentiality is paramount; information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.

## The Designated Teacher (And Deputy)

The designated teacher and deputy must

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role
- Organise training for all staff (whole school training)
- Lead in the development of the school's Child Protection Policy
- Act as a point of contact for staff (and parents)
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents
- Make referrals to Social Services (Gateway team) or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate
- Make referrals to early intervention supports and local services e.g. Family support Hubs
- Liaise with the EA designated officers for Child Protection
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- Keep the School Principal informed
- Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection

## Class Teacher

Teachers see children over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and hear allegations of abuse.

The teacher must:

- refer concerns to the Designated/deputy teacher for Child Protection;
- listen to what is being said and support the child
- act promptly
- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child (appendix 5a)
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed through the written "Record of Concern" proforma (appendix 5b) or verbally about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about student abuse or serious bullying, concerns about home conditions
- Avail of whole school training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children
- **NOT** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures

- **NOT** investigate

## **Parents**

Parents should play their part in Child Protection by:

- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's situation;
- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the child after school;
- letting the school know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home;
- familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Internet and Child Protection Policies;
- reporting to the office when they visit the school
- raising concerns they have in relation to their child with the school.

## **WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005)/ Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools 2017/04.

### **Definition of Abuse**

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child.

### **Types of Abuse**

**Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. 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 appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

**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, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of the other person. It may involve causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

**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. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

**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, and 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.

**Signs and symptoms of abuse** (these are outlined in Appendix 1)

## **PROCEDURES FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO CHILD ABUSE**

### **How a Parent can make a Complaint**

At St.Joseph's we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern they can talk to the class teacher or Designated teacher for child protection. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Public Protection Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in Appendix 2.

### **Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff**

Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a child they 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 her and make full notes. These notes or records should be factual, objective nature and include what was seen, said, heard or reported, the place and time of who was present and should be given to the designated teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The designated teacher will decide whether in the best interest of the child the matter needs to be referred to the 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 parent will be informed immediately.

The designated teacher may need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information or from others who may have relevant information. The designated teacher may also consult with the Western Education & Library Board's designated officer for child protection or Social Services (Gateway Team) before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our prime priority.

If there are concerns that the child or young person may be at risk, the designated teacher is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the designated teacher will telephone the Western Health & Social Services Gateway Team. She will also notify the Western Education & Library Board's designated officer for child protection. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be completed and forwarded to the Gateway team with a copy sent to the WELB designated officer for child protection.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in Appendix 3.

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.

Do's	Don'ts
<p>Do listen to what the child says.</p> <p>Do assure the child they are not at fault.</p> <p>Do explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret.</p> <p>Do <b>document exactly</b> what the child says, using his/her exact words.</p> <p>Do remember not to promise the child confidentiality.</p>	<p>Don't ask leading questions.</p> <p>Don't put words into the child's mouth.</p> <p>Don't ignore the child's behaviour.</p> <p>Don't remove any clothing.</p>

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay calm</li> <li>• Listen</li> <li>• Accept</li> <li>• Reassure</li> <li>• Explain what you are going to do</li> <li>• Record accurately</li> <li>• Seek support for yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Promise to keep secrets</li> <li>• Ask leading questions</li> <li>• Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily</li> <li>• Delay</li> <li>• Start to investigate</li> <li>• Do Nothing</li> </ul>

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

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal or Designated teacher (or the deputy designated teacher if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal or Designated teacher)

If a complaint is made against the Principal or Designated teacher the Chairperson of The Board of Governors will be informed and he will ensure that necessary action is taken.

Where the matter is referred to the Social Services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with students (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The Chairman of the Board of Governors will also be informed immediately.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the agreed disciplinary procedures for teacher's, a detailed record of the complaint, signed by the Principal, shall be retained on the child's file and the file of the member of staff concerned. An entry will also be made in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints.

If, as a result of subsequent investigation by one of the investigating agencies, the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated, the record on the file of the member of staff concerned shall be expunged, and the entry in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints deleted or struck through.

However where disciplinary investigation or action is undertaken in the context of child protection, all details relating to the complaint and disciplinary sanction shall be maintained on the teachers file for a period of 5 years. The record on the child's file should be noted accordingly, and should be maintained indefinitely in case there should be subsequent complaints. In all other cases, the record on both the child's file and the staff member's file should be maintained indefinitely

The school's record of Child Abuse complaints will be made available to the Board of Governors/Management Committee at least annually.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in Appendix 4.

### **Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a volunteer**

Any complaint about the conduct of a person working in the school in a voluntary capacity should be treated in the same manner as complaints against a person who is not on the school's staff, and the above procedures followed. If the Principal has any concern that a child may be at risk, the services of the volunteer should be terminated immediately.

### **ATTENDANCE AT CHILD PROTECTION CASE CONFERENCES AND CORE GROUP MEETINGS**

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated teacher or Principal may be invited to attend an initial and review child protection Case Conferences or core group meeting convened by the Western Health & Social Care Trust and where possible a school representative will be in attendance. A written report will be provided for these meetings and will be compiled after discussion with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored in line with what has been agreed in each child's protection plan;

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies and where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, a legal duty to report this. However, only those who need to know will be told.

## **RECORD KEEPING**

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person.

If a complaint about possible child abuse is received by the school and is not referred to Social Services - or if it is referred and Social Services do not place the child's name on the Child Protection Register - a record on the child's file will be permanently preserved and a confidential copy will be sent to any school to which the child subsequently transfers.

If the Social Services inform the school that child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, a record of this fact and associated documentation from the Social Services will be maintained on the child's file while he continues to attend our school.

When the child's name is removed from the child protection register then all Social Services records will be destroyed and only the school records retained for permanent preservation. Should a child transfer to another school whilst their name is on the child protection register then we will inform the receiving school that his name is on the register and the name of the child's social worker. All Social Services records held by us in relation to the child will then be destroyed. The schools own child protection records in relation to the child will be held in secure and confidential storage for permanent preservation. Please refer to Appendices 5(a) and 5 (b), 5 (c) for recording pro-forma used to record concerns.

## **VETTING PROCEDURES**

All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in the School are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF PAID OR UNPAID**

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 child and young people in their charge must be above reproach. The school has a code of conduct for staff which 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. It is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector.

The schools code of conduct is included as Appendix 6.

## **STAFF TRAINING**

St. Joseph's College is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on Policy and procedures with some members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and annual refresher training. The Principal, Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school Child Protection Policy and code of conduct and given a copy of the policy which includes what to do if you are worried that a child is being abused.

## **THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM**

In the classroom, regular Personal Developments lessons are used as a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self confidence, respect and sensitivity among classmates.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through class assemblies and there is a **permanent Student Information and child protection notice board on a notice board outside the assembly hall and relevant information in each resource area**, which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers. A flow diagram of how a parent may make a complaint is also on display.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues:

- Women's Aid - Yr 10 - Heading for Healthy Relationships
- Police Liaison Officer - Gives annual talks to students in Yr 8 and 12 regarding Internet Safety.
- Nexus - Workshops delivered throughout Feeli8n' Good Week
- Throughout the academic Year all students participate in Personal Development lessons delivered by Form teachers and individual safety and risk taking behaviours are addressed.
- A student councillor is present in school one day per week.

### **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

St. Joseph's College will update this Policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the child protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated teacher.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

Date Policy Reviewed:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Board of Governors)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Designated Teacher)

## Appendix 1

### Signs and Symptoms of abuse - possible indicators

#### Physical Abuse

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
Unexplained bruises - in various stages of healing - grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations; or abrasions; untreated injuries; bruising on both sides of the ear - symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday	Self destructive tendencies; aggressive to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; improbable excuses to explain injuries; chronic runaway; uncomfortable with physical contact; come to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home; clothing inappropriate to weather - to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories

#### Neglect

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
Looks very thin, poorly and sad; constant hunger; lack of energy; untreated medical problems; special needs of child not being met; constant tiredness; inappropriate dress; poor hygiene; repeatedly unwashed; smelly; repeated accidents, especially burns.	Tired or listless (falls asleep in class); steals food; compulsive eating; begging from class friends; withdrawn; lacks concentration; misses school medicals; reports that no carer is at home; low self-esteem; persistent non-attendance at school; exposure to violence including unsuitable videos.

## Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<p><b>Well below average in height and weight; "failing to thrive";</b>            poor hair and skin; alopecia;            swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet;            recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; sudden speech disorders;            signs of self mutilation;            signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness);            extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).</p>	<p>Apathy and dejection;            inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations;            rocking/head banging;            inability to play;            indifference to separation from family            indiscriminate attachment;            reluctance for parental liaison;            fear of new situation;            chronic runaway;            attention seeking/needing behaviour;            poor peer relationships.</p>

## Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<p><b>Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs;</b>            bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas;            torn, stained or bloody underclothes;            chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches;            difficulty in walking or sitting;            frequent urinary infections;            avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers;            unexplained pregnancies where the identity of the father is vague;            anorexia/gross over-eating.</p>	<p>What the child tells you;            Withdrawn; chronic depression;            excessive sexual precociousness;            seductiveness;            children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal;            over concerned for siblings;            poor self esteem; self devaluation;            lack of confidence; peer problems;            lack of involvement;            massive weight change;            suicide attempts (especially adolescents); hysterical/angry outbursts;            lack of emotional control;            sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour;            inappropriate sex play;</p>

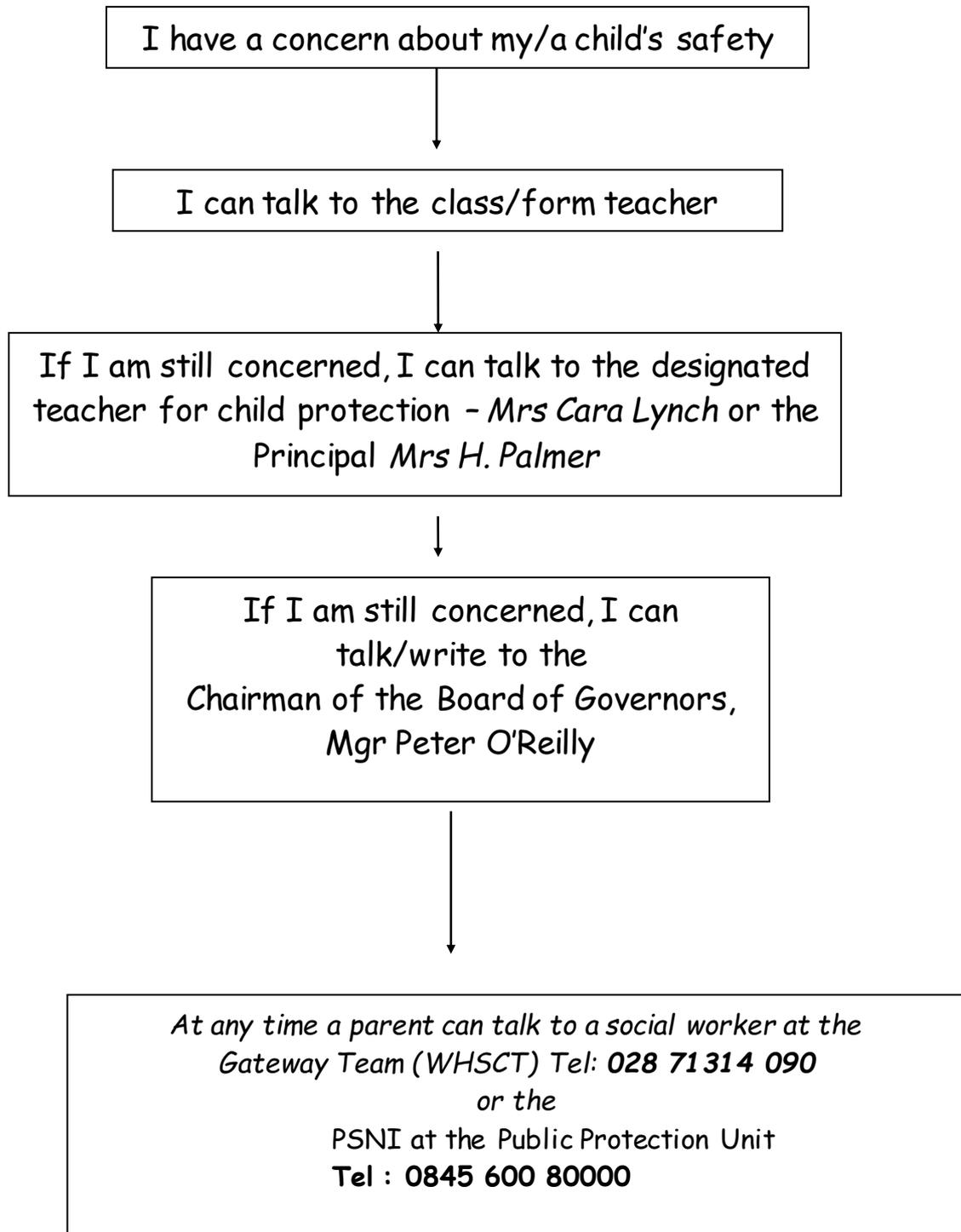
	<p>repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories;</p> <p>vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity;</p> <p>exposure to pornographic material.</p>
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## **Exploitation**

<b>Potential Indicators</b>
Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones
Truancing
Going missing or returning late
Receiving lots of texts or calls before leaving school
Change in mood becoming agitated or stressed
Appearing distraught or dishevelled or under the influence of substances
Inappropriate sexualised behaviours for age
Physical symptoms e.g. bruising or bite marks
Being collected by unknown adults
New peer groups
Significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend
Low self esteem
Increasing secretiveness
Change in personal hygiene
Self harm and other expressions of despair
Evidence or suspicion of substance abuse

Appendix 2

## How a Parent can make a Complaint



### Appendix 3

Procedure where the School has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff

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 should make notes of what was said or observed and must **ACT PROMPTLY**

Teacher refers matter to designated teacher, discussed with designated teacher, makes full notes.

Designated teacher meets with Principal to plan course of action and ensures that a written record is made and treated confidentially.

#### CONTACT NUMBERS

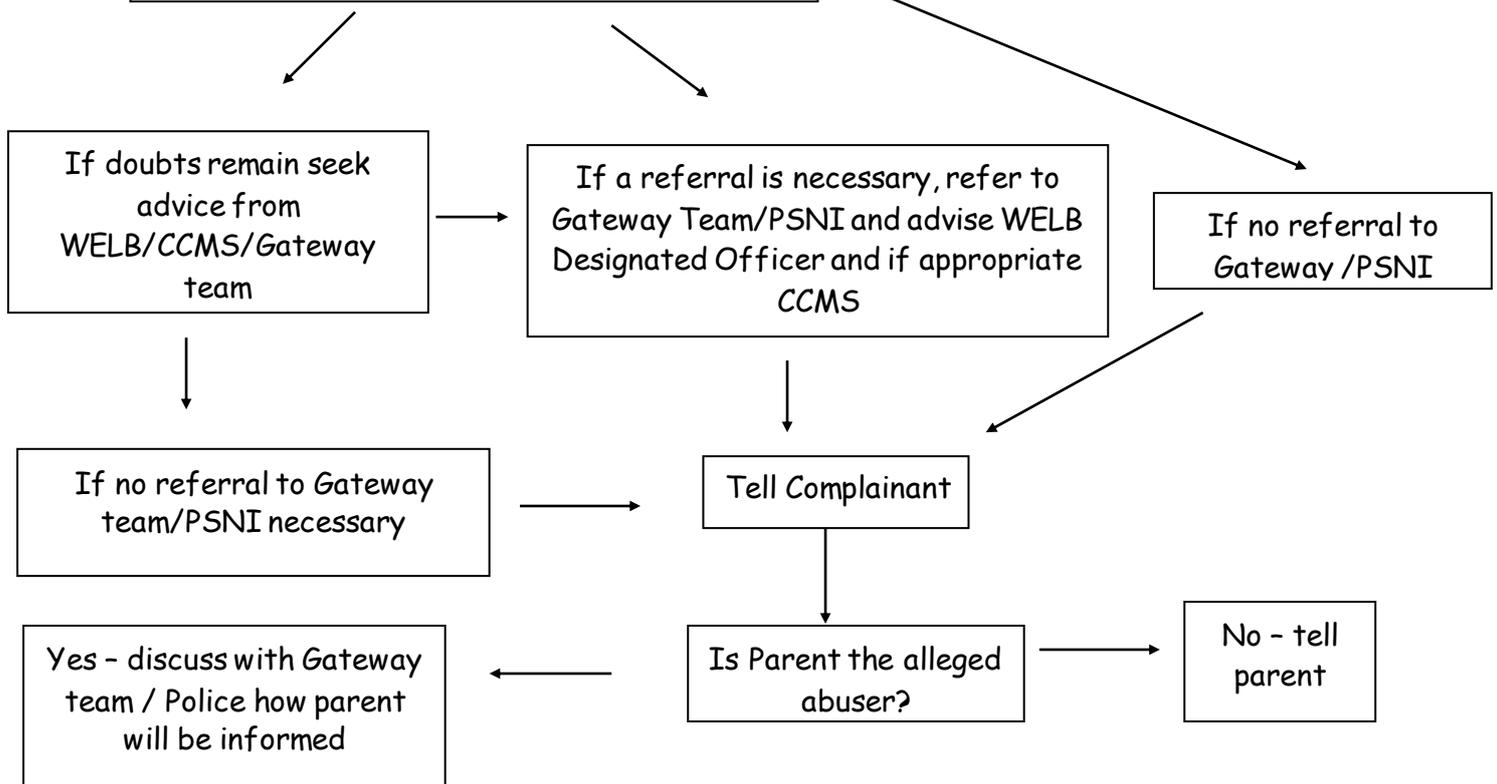
##### EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Designated Child Protection Officer  
1 Hospital Road Omagh  
Tel: 028 82411289

##### WESTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST

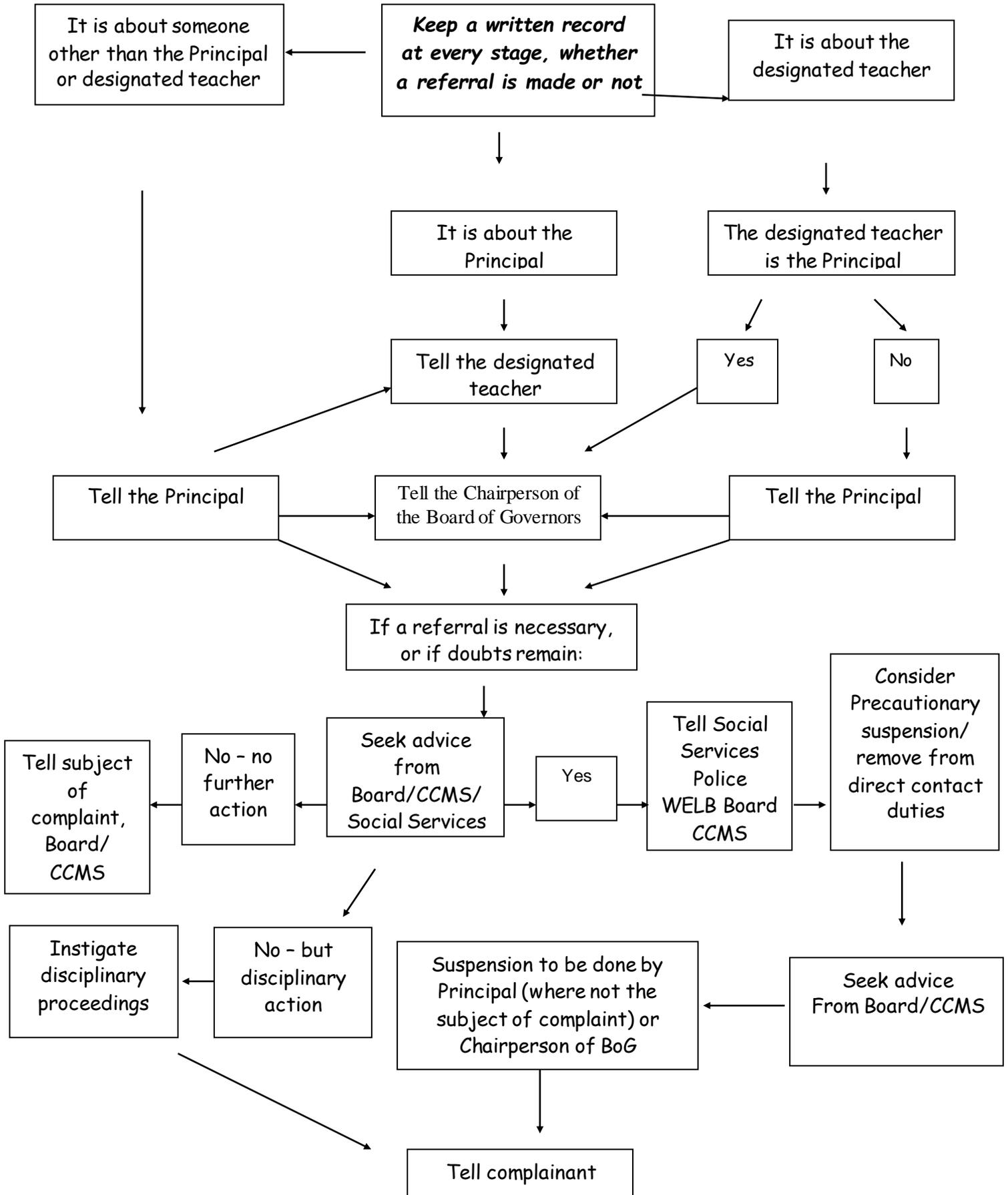
Gateway Team,  
Whitehill,  
106 Irish Street,  
L'Derry  
Tel:028 71 71314090

PSNI (Public Protection Unit)  
Public Protection Unit  
Tel:084560080000



Appendix 4

Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school staff.





5 (b)

St. Joseph's College



CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT REPORT - FORM B

Child's Initial \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Details of Incident

Person completing the report \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to school \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if person making the report is not known)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

5 (c)

**St. Joseph's College**



**CHILD PROTECTION UPDATE RECORD - (FORM C)**

**Child's Name**\_\_\_\_\_ **DOB**\_\_\_\_\_ **Year Group**\_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Carers\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance in current school year\_\_\_\_\_days out of possible\_\_\_\_\_days.

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**ATTAINMENT LEVELS / EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

**INTELLECTUAL ABILITY**(eg below average/average/above average)

**PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO INTELLECTUAL ABILITY**

**PRESENTATION OF WORK, INCLUDING HOMEWORK**

**PARTICIPATION IN TEACHING / LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

## CODE OF CONDUCT

### Appendix 6

#### Private Meetings with Students

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual students. 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.
- 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 is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- Where possible another student 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 Students

- As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their students.
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest staff should touch students only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Staff who have to administer first-aid to a student 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.*
- Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the student, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- 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.
- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising students in a residential setting, or in approved out of schools activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in

proximity to students in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

### **Choice and Use of Teaching Materials**

- Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by students 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.
- 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 students, 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.

### **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.

From time to time it will be prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with our students and their manner and approach to individual students, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of students or of their parents/carers.