



'OPENING DOORS OF  
OPPORTUNITY TOGETHER'

# SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2024



## Policy and Procedures on Child Protection

### INTRODUCTION

This policy is based on the 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – A Guide for Schools 2024, 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2016', DENI Circular (2015/13), and the SBNI Regional Core Child Protection Policies and Procedures.

The systems in place for safeguarding children involve joint working and shared decision-making by the professionals and agencies involved. Children's needs must always come first.

We in Meadow Bridge Primary School 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 happy, caring and safe environment (where a love of learning is fostered, and everyone is valued for their unique talents and individual abilities). One way in which we seek to protect our pupils is by helping them 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.

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

We recognise that Safeguarding is more than child protection. Safeguarding begins with **promotion and preventative** activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection. Child **protection** refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or who are likely to suffer significant harm.

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staff of our school have also adopted a Code of Conduct for our behaviour towards pupils. (Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers).

### 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, Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – A Guide for Schools (2024)', Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2016), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance and the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

The following principles form the basis of our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy:

- In any incident the child's or young person's welfare is paramount; this overrides all other considerations;
- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously; (Articles 12 and 19: United Nation Conventions on the Rights of a Child);
- 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;
- An appropriate balance should be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families, but where there is conflict the child's interests must always come first. All efforts should be made to work co-operatively with parents, unless doing so is inconsistent with ensuring the child's safety;
- Safeguarding is a shared responsibility and the most effective way of ensuring that a child's needs are met. Sound decision-making depends on the fullest possible understanding of the child or young person's circumstances and their needs. This involves effective information sharing, strong organisational governance and leadership, collaboration and understanding between families, agencies, individuals and professionals;
- Decisions and action taken must be considered, well-informed and based on outcomes that are sensitive to, and take into account of, the child's specific circumstances, risks to which they are exposed, and their assessed needs.

### **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:

- Acceptable Use of Mobile Phones and Related Technologies;
- Attendance;
- Addressing Bullying;
- e-Safety;
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Record Management Policy;
- ICT;
- Intimate Care;
- Learning Support and Special Educational Needs
- Pastoral Care;
- Positive Behaviour;
- Relationships and Sexuality Education;
- Staff Code of Conduct; and
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling;
- Complaints Policy

These policies are available to parents/carers. Any parent/carer requiring a copy should contact the school Principal or visit the school website

## **LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT**

There is a broad range of international and domestic legislation relating to child welfare and protection. Details of all relevant legislation are set out in Annex A of the Department of Education Northern Ireland's document, 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – A Guide for Schools (2024)'. Schools must be aware of their responsibilities; however, as a starting point schools must be aware of the following:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995;
- The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003;
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008;
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007;
- The Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011;
- The Public Ombudsman Act (NI) 2016;
- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016;
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (March 2016);
- Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2013-2020 and subsequent action plans;
- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Prevention in Partnership.

## **SAFER SCHOOLS NI**

Safer Schools NI is a digital library of age-appropriate safeguarding resources. As a school we use this App as a support service. <https://saferschoolsni.co.uk/>

## **OUR SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

| The following are members of the school's Safeguarding Team: |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| - Designated Teacher   | Mr A McCollum (Vice-Principal)      |
| - Deputy Designated Teacher                                  | Ms R Stirling (Head of Key Stage 1) |
| - Chair of the Board of Governors                            | Miss J Townsley                     |
| - Designated Governor for Child Protection                   | Mr C Donnan                         |
| - Learning Support Co-Ordinator                              | Miss J Wortley                      |
| - ICT Co-ordinator   | Mr A McQuitty                       |
| - Principal  | Mr D J Ball                         |

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

The responsibilities of the team should include:

- The monitoring and periodic review of Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements in the school;
- Support for the Designated Teacher in the exercise of his Child Protection responsibilities, including recognition of the administrative and emotional demands of the post;
- Ensuring attendance of Governors and staff at relevant training - including refresher training - in keeping with legislative and best practice requirements;
- As best practice, the Safeguarding Team should review their Child Protection/Safeguarding practices annually using the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) pro-forma entitled 'Guidance for the Evaluation of Child Protection/Safeguarding'. ETI expects the pro-forma to be completed and provided to them as a permanent record on all types of inspections. Phase and sector appropriate versions of the pro-forma (which is annually reviewed and updated) and other information from ETI is available on the ETI website. ([www.etini.gov.uk/articles/safeguarding](http://www.etini.gov.uk/articles/safeguarding))

## **THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 places a statutory duty on Boards of Governors (BoG) to:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils;
- have a written Child Protection Policy; and
- specifically address the prevention of bullying in school behaviour management policies.
- All Governors should have initial Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) Child Protection training with the Chair and Designated Governor for Child Protection undertaking full CPSS training.

All Governors should undertake refresher Child Protection training during every term of office (four years).

## **PROCESS**

Boards of Governors must ensure that:

- A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed;
- A Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher are appointed in their schools;
- They have a full understanding of the roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection training is given to all staff and governors including refresher training;
- The school has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Complaints Procedure every two years;
- The school has an Addressing Bullying Policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying;
- The school ensures that other safeguarding policies are reviewed at least every three years, or as specified in relevant guidance;
- There is a Code of Conduct for all adults working in the school;
- All school staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted in line with DE Circular 2012/19;
- They receive a full annual report on all Child Protection matters (It is a legal requirement that they receive a report of Child Protection activities at each meeting of the Board of Governors). This report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the school, including training for staff;
- The school maintains the following Child Protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 'Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff' and 2016/20 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools.
- Record keeping should include:
  - Safeguarding and Child Protection concerns;
  - Disclosures of abuse;
  - Complaints against staff; and
  - Staff induction and training.

## **THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

The Chair of the Board of Governors should ensure that:

- He/she has received appropriate Education Authority training;
- A safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment;
- The school has a Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy;
- Governors undertake appropriate Child Protection and Recruitment & Selection training provided by the Child Protection Support Service for Schools {CPSSS} and the Governor Support and Human Resource Departments;
- A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed;
- He/she assumes lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the school Principal;
- That the Board of Governors receive updates at each Governors' Meeting and a full written annual report in relation to Child Protection activity;
- The Record of Child Abuse Complaints is signed and dated annually even if there have been no entries.

## **THE DESIGNATED GOVERNOR FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN / CHILD PROTECTION**

The Designated Governor for Safeguarding and Child Protection should avail of Safeguarding and Child Protection awareness training delivered by CPSSS and will take the lead in Child Protection issues in order to advise the Governors on:

- The role of the Designated Teachers;
- The content of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- The content of a Code of Conduct for adults within the school;
- The content of the updates at each meeting, and full Annual Designated Teacher's Report;
- Recruitment, selection, and vetting of staff.

## **THE PRINCIPAL**

The Principal, as the Secretary to the Board of Governors, will assist the Board of Governors to fulfil its Safeguarding and Child Protection duties, keeping them informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to Safeguarding and Child Protection, ensuring any circulars and guidance from the Department of Education is shared promptly, and inclusion of Child Protection activities on each BoG meeting agenda. In addition, the Principal takes the lead in managing Child Protection concerns relating to staff.

The Principal has delegated responsibility for establishing and managing the Safeguarding and Child Protection systems within the school.

The Principal must ensure that:

- He attends training on managing Safeguarding and Child Protection; A Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher are appointed;
- All staff receive Safeguarding and Child Protection training;
- There is protected time and support to allow the Designated Teachers (DTs) to carry out this important role effectively and that DTs are selected, based on knowledge and skills required to fulfil the role;
- All necessary referrals are procedurally correct; The Chair of the Board of Governors is kept informed;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection activities and updates feature on the agenda of each Board of Governors' meeting-and an annual report is provided;
- The school's Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually and that parents and pupils receive a copy/summary of this policy at least once every 2 years;
- Confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to the Board of Governors on a need-to-know basis;
- New staff and volunteers have Safeguarding and Child Protection awareness sessions as part of an induction.

#### **THE DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CHILD PROTECTION**

The Designated Teacher must:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role;
- Organise induction and training for all staff (whole school training);
- Lead in the development of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and act as a point of contact for staff and parents/carers;
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements for parents/carers;
- Make referrals to Social Services Gateway team or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate;
- Liaise with the Education Authority's (EA) Designated Officers for Safeguarding and Child Protection;
- Maintain records of all Safeguarding/Child Protection concerns;
- Keep the school Principal informed;
- Promote a Safeguarding and Child Protection ethos in the school;
- Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection.

#### **THE DEPUTY DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CHILD PROTECTION**

The role of the Deputy Designated Teacher is to work co-operatively with the Designated Teacher in fulfilling his/her responsibilities.

It is important that the Deputy Designated Teacher works in partnership with the Designated Teacher so that he/she develops sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher when required. Deputy Designated Teachers are also provided with the same specialist training by CPSS to help them in their role.

## **ALL MEMBERS OF SCHOOL STAFF**

Staff should be alert to all types of abuse and to their legal obligations (see Annex A of DENI Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – A Schools Guide 2017), including reporting of offences - Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 makes it an offence to fail to disclose an arrestable offence. This includes crimes against children.

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

Staff should remember the 5 Rs:

- Receive;
- Reassure;
- Respond;
- Record; and
- Refer.

Staff must:

- Act promptly;
- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief and support the child;
- Not give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures;
- Not investigate;
- Not ask leading questions;
- Refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teachers for Safeguarding and Child Protection/Principal;
- Avail of whole-school training and other relevant training regarding safeguarding children;
- Make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child.

In addition, the class teacher should:

- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying, concerns about home conditions including disclosures of domestic violence.

The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teachers will immediately follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures.

## **PARENTS/CARERS**

References to 'parent' have the same meaning as anyone with 'Parental Responsibility' as defined in the Article 6 of the Children Order i.e. 'all rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property'. In practical terms, it means the responsibility to care for, and the right to make important decisions about, the child.



The primary responsibility for safeguarding and protection of children rests with parents/carers who should feel confident about raising any concerns they have in relation to their child. As part of the ongoing work of fostering trust and good relationships with parents/carers, the school will help parents/carers to understand its responsibility for the welfare of all the children and young people in its charge.

It should be clear that the school will always protect the best interests of the child and, in cases of suspected abuse, may refer cases directly to the investigative agencies. It is important that parents take time to read these policies and know they are required to inform the school:

- If the child has a medical condition or educational need;
- If there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child; If there is any change in a child's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility;

More information on parental/carer responsibility can be found on the EA website at:

[www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection/](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection/)

Parents/carers should play their part in safeguarding by:

- Informing 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 other school policies relevant to Safeguarding and Child Protection. (Refer to Other Relevant Policies listed on Page 3 of this document)
- Reporting to the office when they visit the school;
- Raising concerns they have in relation to their child with the school.

## **RECORD KEEPING**

All Child Protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from other files that are held on that child and are only accessible by the Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teacher and Principal. All record keeping is in line with our Record Management Policy.

## **TRANSFER OF RECORDS**

Under the Education (Pupil Records and Reporting) (Transitional) Regulations (NI) 2007, Boards of Governors are required to make arrangements to transfer a formal record of a pupil's academic achievements, other skills and abilities and progress within 15 school days of a pupil transferring schools. The requirement does not include the transfer of Child Protection records. However, where there have been, or are current, concerns about a pupil, the school should consider what information should be shared with the new school.

Past safeguarding concerns and the response to these can be significant, should concerns arise for the child at a later time. The third Data Protection Principle is key in relation to deciding whether to transfer past concerns. If the information, current or historical, is deemed to be relevant then it should be shared.

The Designated Teacher is responsible for ensuring that copies of relevant Child Protection records are transferred to the DT of the receiving school, in the most secure and appropriate manner to minimise the risk of any data breach. The data controller, ie the school, is accountable for any data breach.

When a child on whom the school holds Safeguarding or Child Protection information leaves the school and the school are unaware of the new school they must notify the Education Welfare Service at the Education Authority who will then attempt to locate the child. Social Services must be informed immediately if the child has a Child Protection Plan or is a Looked After Child. The school must retain the child's Child Protection records and forward the relevant information to the receiving school when the child has been traced.

When a child whose name is on the Child Protection Register changes school, the school which the child is leaving should inform the receiving school immediately that his/her name is on the Register and pass on contact details for the social worker. The school should then destroy all Child Protection records on the child supplied by Social Services, including records of Case Conferences, and should inform the child's Case Co-ordinator in Social Services. The remaining Child Protection record should be copied, as relevant, to the new school. When considering what information is relevant, advice can be sought from the CPSSS. The school to which the child is transferring should contact the child's social worker for relevant information. The leaving school can retain original copies of their own documents.

It is good practice for the DT to discuss concerns directly with the DT from the receiving school in advance of sending the Child Protection record.

### **APPOINTMENT OF STAFF**

All staff (paid or unpaid) appointed to Meadow Bridge Primary School, are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and to DENI guidance. Substitute Teachers are employed through NISTR. All adults working on a regular basis with our pupils will be vetted through Access NI. Volunteers brought in on an irregular basis, will be supervised by a member of staff.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Child Protection arrangements will seek to maintain the necessary balance between protecting children and respecting the rights of parents, families/carers and members of staff.

### **ADDRESSING BULLYING**

A separate document outlining the school's policy and procedures regarding 'Bullying' is available. This has been brought up to date with regard to the 'Addressing Bullying in Schools' Act.

## **WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools A Guide for Schools'.

Appendix 1 highlights physical and behavioural signs.

**Physical Abuse** 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.

**Emotional Abuse** 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.

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing.

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.

**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 often 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.

**Sexual Exploitation** is a form of **sexual abuse**. It occurs where an individual or a group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may even have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through technology.

**Female Genital Mutilation** (FGM) involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons.

The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

**Grooming** of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child's/young person's loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case.

### **Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse**

The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy (2016) defines domestic and sexual violence and abuse as follows:

**Domestic Violence and Abuse** 'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.'

If it comes to the attention of school staff that domestic abuse is or may be a factor for a child/young person, this must be passed to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with Social Services.

**Sexual Violence and Abuse** 'Any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).'

Please note that coercive, exploitative and harmful behaviour includes taking advantage of an individual's incapacity to give informed consent.

The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy can be found at: [www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/stopping-domestic-and-sexual-violence-and-abusenorthern-ireland-strategy](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/stopping-domestic-and-sexual-violence-and-abusenorthern-ireland-strategy)

**Forced Marriage** is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Forced Marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland, and where an agency, organisation or practitioner has knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person, they should contact the PSNI immediately.

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection, or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. CSE does not always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point.

**E-Safety/Internet Abuse** Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, social environments, and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

**Sexting** is the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the Internet. There are two aspects to Sexting:

- **Sexting between individuals in a relationship**  
Pupils need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual relationship) and in these cases, the PSNI will be contacted.
- **Sharing an inappropriate image with an intent to cause distress**  
Schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted)) to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent - see Articles 33-35 of the Act for more detail. Police should be contacted to help prevent further such incidents.

If a young person has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures should be followed.

### **OPERATION ENCOMPASS**

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local PSNI and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, when the PSNI have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of the school Safeguarding Team. This will allow the school Safeguarding Team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the Designated Teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 'Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools' and a note will be made in the child's child protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the PSNI will only be shared outside of the Safeguarding Team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the Safeguarding Team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

For further information, see The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

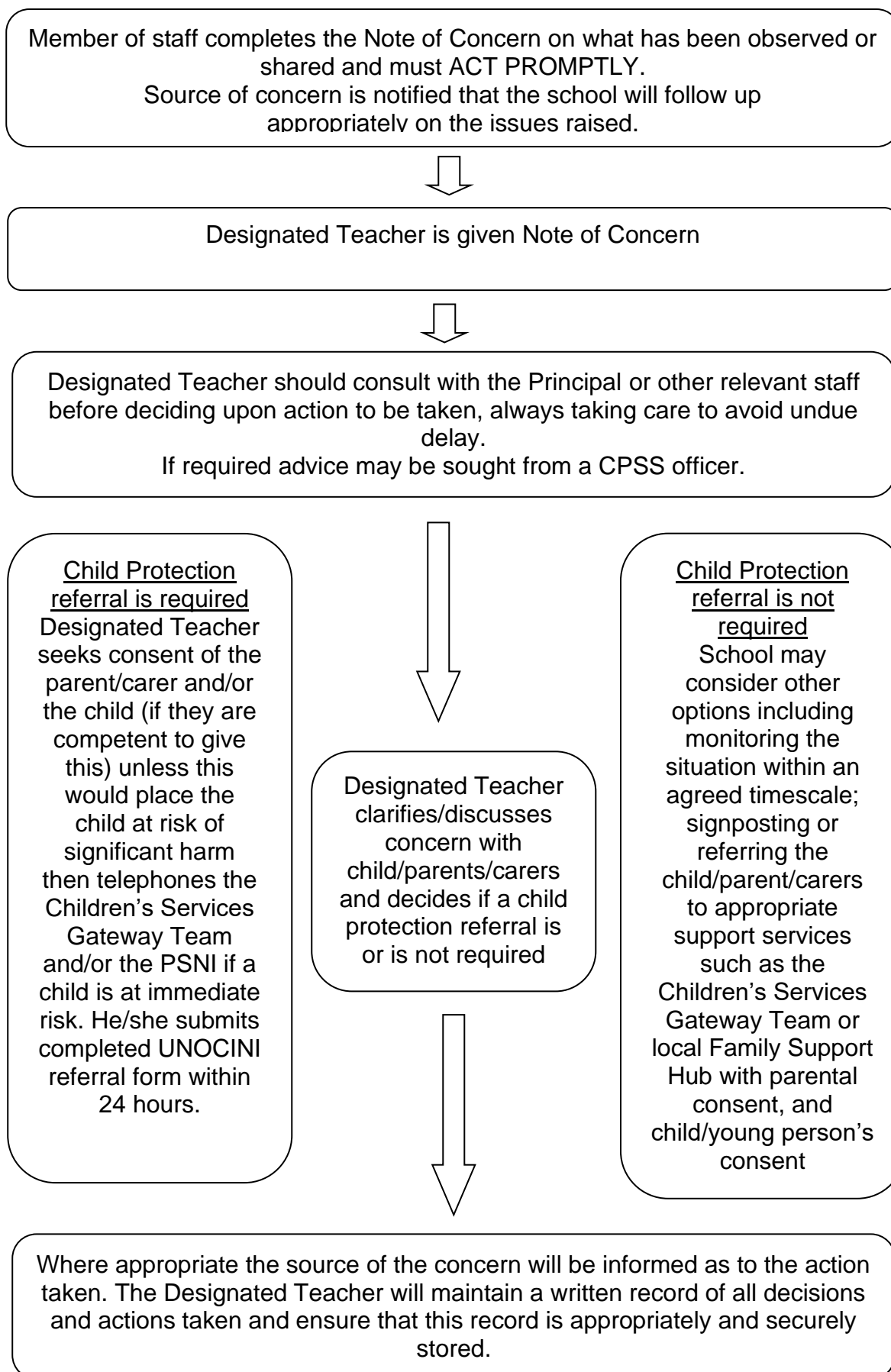
**THREE FLOW DIAGRAMS**, taken from 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools (DENI)' have been included to summarise procedures.

**Figure 1** outlines procedures where the school has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school's staff.

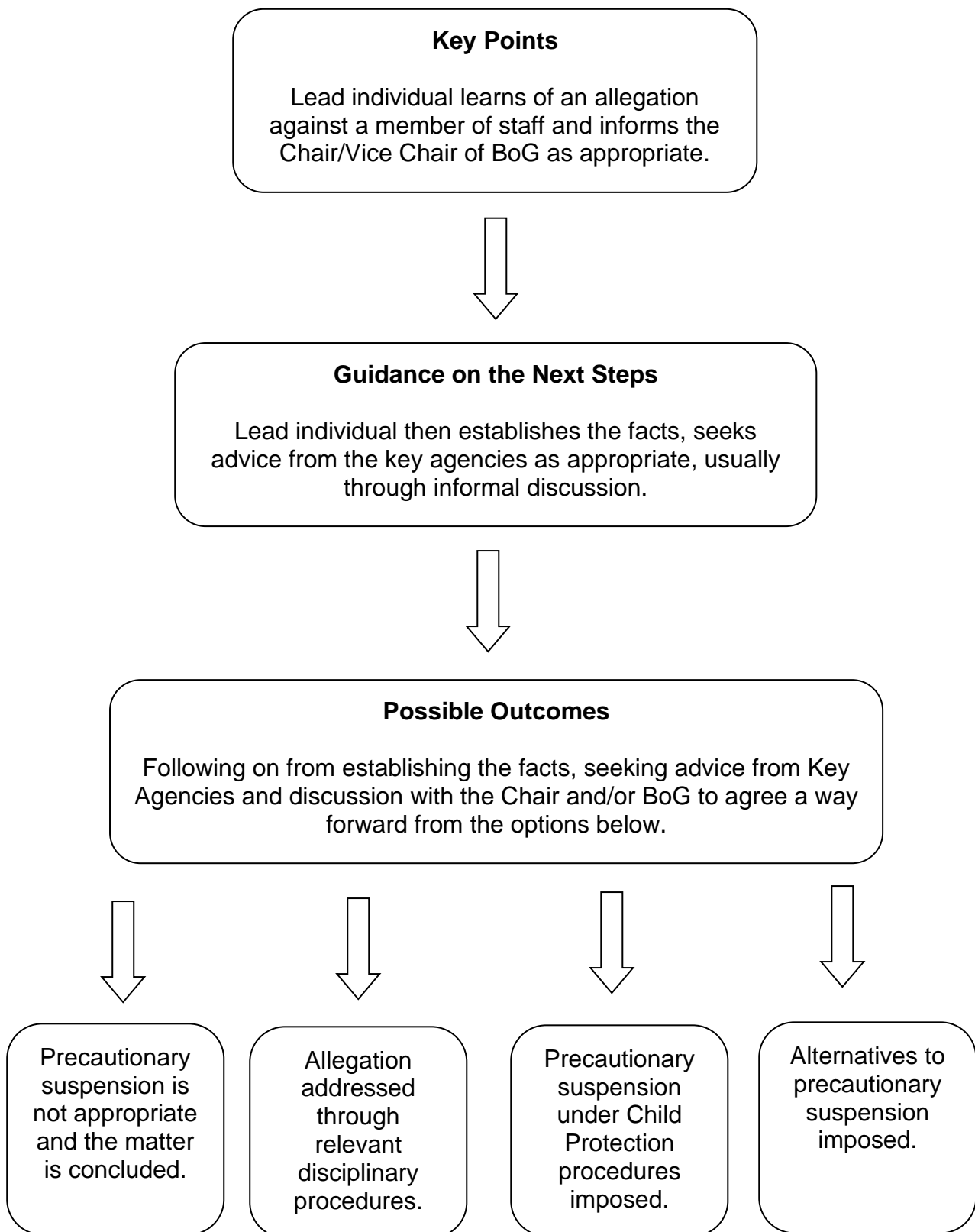
**Figure 2** outlines procedures where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff.

**Figure 3** outlines how a parent can contact school with a concern.

**Figure 1: Procedure where the School has concerns, or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff**

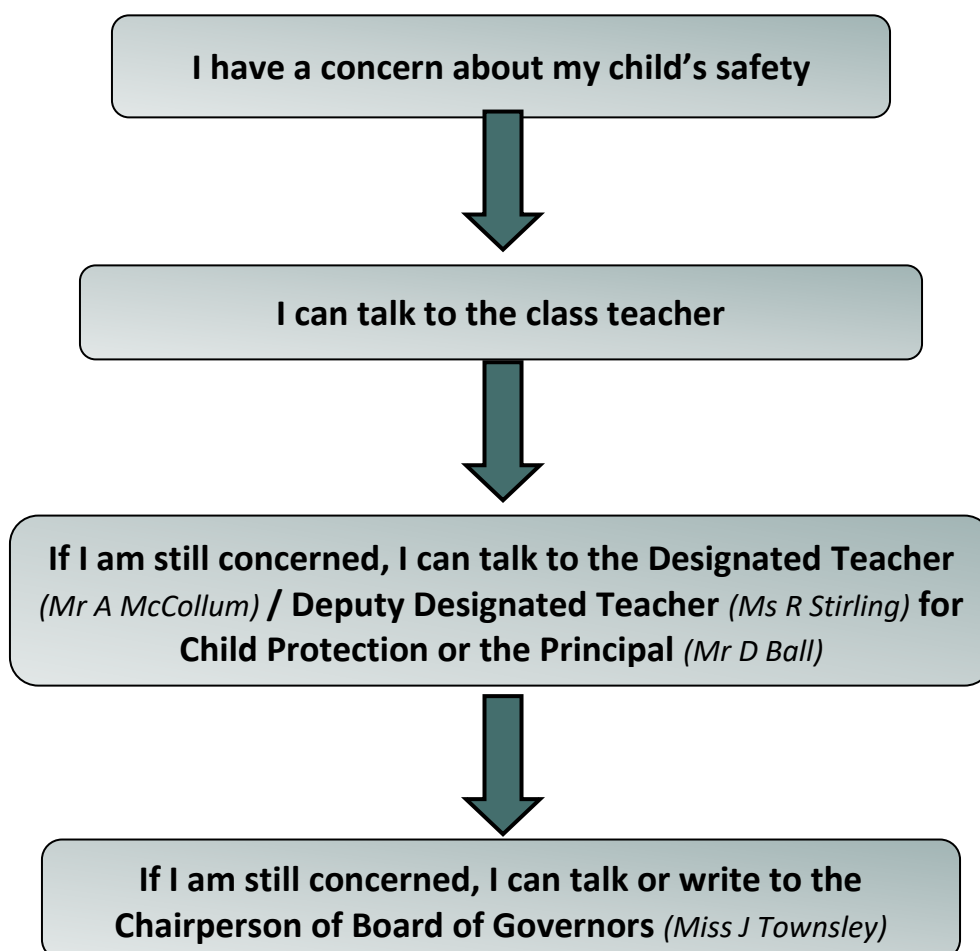


**Figure 2: Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff**





**Figure 3: How a concerned parent, guardian or visitor, can contact Meadow Bridge regarding any concerns about Safeguarding and Child Protection.**



- At any time, you can refer to the Complaints Policy of Meadow Bridge Primary School which is accessible via the school's Website or Office. If feeling concerned at any stage in this process, you can contact the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (0800 343 424).
- At any time, you can talk to the local Children's Services Gateway Team (0300 1000 300) or the PSNI Central Referral Unit at 028 9025 9299.

### WHO CAN I SPEAK TO?

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| <b>Chairperson of Board of Governors</b>        | <b>Miss J Townsley</b> |
| <b>Principal</b>                                | <b>Mr D Ball</b>       |
| <b>Designated Teacher/Vice-Principal</b>        | <b>Mr A McCollum</b>   |
| <b>Deputy Designated Teacher</b>                | <b>Ms R Stirling</b>   |
| <b>Designated Governor for Child Protection</b> | <b>Mr C Donnan</b>     |

- At any time you can talk to the local Children's Services Gateway Team (0300 1000 300) or the PSNI Central Referral Unit at [cru@psni.police.uk](mailto:cru@psni.police.uk)

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED (OR DISCLOSED) CHILD ABUSE**

Observation of signs and symptoms of possible abuse can do no more than give rise to concern - they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. It must always be remembered that alternative medical, psychological or social explanations may exist for the signs and symptoms of possible abuse. However, teachers and other staff should be aware of the possible implications of, and alert to, all such signs, particularly if they appear in combination or are repeated regularly.

Any member of staff who has a concern about the welfare or safety of a child or young person should complete a **Note of Concern** (Appendix 2). Notes must be made as soon as possible after the incident to ensure an expedient response, and certainly within 24 hours, to maintain the accuracy and content of the report. For some children, a one-off serious incident or concern may occur and staff will have no doubt that this must be immediately recorded and reported. More often, however, it is the accumulation of a number of small incidents, events or observations that can provide the evidence of harm being caused to a child.

The staff member should report the concern to **the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DT)** at an early stage, immediately if the concern is of a serious nature, as the DT may be aware of other circumstances which would influence steps to be taken. The Note of Concern and any further details discussed, or action taken, should be placed on the pupil's **Child Protection File** and should be signed and dated by both parties to confirm the information is accurate. Following procedures in Flowchart 1

- If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other members 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 on the Note of Concern form.
- 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. Appendix 3 Note of Concern form.

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 Designated Officer (EA), 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 on appropriate advice. ***The safety of the child is our first priority.***

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

- Social Services and/or the PSNI
- 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 may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately. (Following procedures in Flowchart 2.)
- If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Designated Teacher (or Deputy Designated Teacher, if he is not available) must be informed immediately. He will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.
- 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 cannot 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.

It is imperative that any disclosure by a child, or concern that indicates a child may be at immediate risk, is reported immediately to the PSNI and Social Services to ensure that emergency protection measures are put in place. This is particularly important if there is a risk of the child at home. Contact details for the PSNI Central Referral Unit and Duty Social Workers can be found in the Contacts Section.

Pupils who are the victims of abuse often display emotional or behavioural difficulties which may require a holistic assessment of need, to determine appropriate level and types of intervention.

It is always preferable to prevent abuse or for intervention to take place at the earliest possible stage.

All school staff are well placed to observe outward symptoms which may be due to child abuse.

## CONCLUSION

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff inter-relate 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. If employees have any doubts about points in this policy or how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult the Principal.

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.

**Physical Abuse**

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

**Emotional Abuse**

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

## Neglect

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

## Sexual Abuse

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

**Safeguarding and Child Protection  
INCIDENT / DISCLOSURE REPORT**

**Pupil's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Pupil's DOB:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ **Pupil's Current Class:** \_\_\_\_\_

|   |
|---|
| <p><b>Date and Time of Incident / Disclosure:</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Circumstances of Incident / Disclosure:</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Nature and Description of Concern:</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Parties Involved (including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom):</b></p> |

|   |
|---|
| <b>Action taken at the time:</b>  |
| <b>Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:</b>  |
| <b>Any further action taken:</b>  |
| <b>Written report passed to Designated Teacher:</b> <span style="float: right;">Yes: <input type="checkbox"/></span> <span style="float: right;">No: <input type="checkbox"/></span><br><b>If 'No' state reason:</b>                            |
| <b>Date and time of the report to Designated Teacher:</b>   |
| <b>Written note from staff member placed in pupil's Child Protection file:</b> <span style="float: right;">Yes: <input type="checkbox"/></span> <span style="float: right;">No: <input type="checkbox"/></span><br><b>If 'No' state reason:</b> |

**Report Completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Role / Job Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Child Protection Contacts**

| <b>EA Offices Contact Number</b> |                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Belfast</b>                   | <b>028 9056 4289</b> |
| <b>Antrim</b>                    | <b>028 9448 2223</b> |
| <b>Dundonald</b>                 | <b>028 9056 6216</b> |
| <b>Armagh</b>                    | <b>028 3834 1975</b> |
| <b>Omagh</b>                     | <b>028 8241 146</b>  |

**Duty Social Worker Gateway Team (Health & Social Care Trusts)**

| <b>Gateway Teams</b>              | <b>Contact Number</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Belfast</b>                    | <b>028 9050 7000</b>  |
| <b>Northern</b>                   | <b>0300 1234 333</b>  |
| <b>South Eastern</b>              | <b>0300 1000 300</b>  |
| <b>Southern</b>                   | <b>028 3741 5285</b>  |
| <b>Western</b>                    | <b>028 8283 5156</b>  |
| <b>Out of Hours for All Areas</b> | <b>028 9504 9999</b>  |

**PSNI**

The Central Referral Unit (CRU) based in Antrim Road PSNI Station is part of the Public Protection Unit and is the central referral point for child sexual and physical abuse allegations.

The office is open Monday to Friday 8am to 9pm and weekends and public holidays 9am to 5pm.

**Telephone: 028 9025 9299**