

Strabane Controlled Primary

Policy for Safeguarding /Child Protection

POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING/CHILD PROTECTION

General Introduction

It is our desire at this school to see children happy and able to achieve and develop to their full potential. Consequently, we will take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety preserved. To this end we need to understand:

- a) what child abuse is
- b) what the school's role is in identifying and dealing with it
- c) how the school can put prevention measures in place
- d) how to support children who have been abused after the event

To achieve these ends the following policy statement, guidance notes and procedures have been drawn up. They will be reviewed regularly to ensure their legality, comprehensiveness and effectiveness. **It must be emphasised at the outset that the safety and well being of every child is of paramount importance to us and no form of abuse is acceptable. Staff will always act in the best interests of the child.**

All our staff have been subject to appropriate background check. The staff have also adopted a Code of Practice for our behaviour towards pupils. The Code is set out in the Appendix to this policy statement.

Definition

1. Abuse may be as a result of:
 - a. a direct act
 - b. failure to provide proper care
 - c. both above

2. Abuse takes a number of forms including:

Neglect	the persistent or significant neglect of a child (for example by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care) which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.
Physical abuse	physical injury to a child, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
Sexual abuse	the sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification; the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles.
Emotional	persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.

3. Bullying

In most instances bullying will not trigger the child protection procedures but in certain circumstances it can constitute a form of abuse. Bullying can be:

- (i) Physical e.g. hitting, kicking
- (ii) Verbal e.g. name calling, threats
- (iii) Indirect e.g. excluding, spreading rumours

All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, both to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both victim and bully will be contacted immediately bullying behaviour is identified.

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

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case but will include the loss of privileges. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped. If the bullying behaviour persists the bully's parents will be invited to the school for interview by the principal so that an agreed approach between home and school may be initiated. If this is not successful the Governors reserve the right to suspend or ultimately seek to expel a pupil.

4. Arrangements for Reporting Abuse in School are:

- (i) The designated teacher for child protection is **Miss L Finlay** In her absence Mr. D. Canning will assume responsibility for child protection matters. Mrs McDonnell is responsible for child protection in the nursery. If no member of the safeguarding team is available staff should contact the Education Authority's child protection officers directly or go straight to Social Services. The school safeguarding team consists of Miss Finlay, Mr. Canning, Mrs. McDonnell (nursery), Rev. Shaw (Chairman) and Mrs. Cole (governor).
- (ii) If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff that 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 (that is a matter for Social Services) but should report their concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with her and make full notes.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) The Principal, in consultation with the designated teacher, will decide whether the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. If the decision is not to inform Social Services the principal will inform the parents and the informant of the decision. 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 advice from the Education Authority's designated officer or Social Services before a referral is made. **At all times the safety of the child will be our first priority.**

- (v) Where there are concerns about possible abuse the principal or designated teacher shall be responsible for notifying the local Social Services officer and the Education Authority's designated officers.
- The Education Authority's office Tel. 028 82 411289
 - Social Services office (Gateway) Tel. 71314090
- (vi) When abuse is suspected a record of all the information available must be kept. Staff must note the **factual details** regarding:
- (a) what they have observed (signs of physical injury should be described in detail)
 - (b) when it was observed – record time, place, date and who was present
DO NOT REMOVE A CHILD'S CLOTHING
 - (c) what the child said – the actual words used should be recorded as far as possible
NB children should not be asked leading questions e.g. "Did they do X to you? Rather, "Tell me what happened".
The principal or designated teacher will ensure that these records are signed and kept.
A pro forma is available 'Record of Information Provided by Pupil'.
- (vii) If a parent has a concern about a child's safety he/she should speak to the child's class teacher or the designated teacher. If this process does not allay the parent's concerns he/she should talk to the principal. If concerns remain the parent should contact the Chairman of the Governors. Parents can also, at any time, discuss their concerns with Social Services or the Police.
- (viii) When an EWO or Educational Psychologist are the first to identify an abuse problem it is their responsibility to inform the Designated Teacher and Principal.
- (ix) If a member of staff is suspected of child abuse the principal must be informed immediately by the person who suspects. It is then the principal's duty to inform the designated teacher and the Chairman of the Governors. Together they will decide if the allegation:
- (a) is without substance
 - (b) requires immediate referral to police and Social Services
 - (c) requires consideration under disciplinary procedures
- (x) If the school is unsure about making a referral advice can be sought from the following:
- Social Services
 - School nurse
 - Education Authority's designated officer
 - EWO
- A record of events will be kept on the school's 'Record of Child Abuse Complaints' form. A copy of this will be placed in the child's personal folder.
- (xi) If it is the principal who is suspected, the staff member who is aware of the possible offence must report it to the designated teacher who will report to the Education Authority and the Chairman of the Governors. It is then Education Authority's responsibility to notify Social Services.

- (xii) 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. If formal proceedings begin against any member of staff the Chairman will inform the Board of Governors as soon as possible.
- (xiii) If Social Services find out about child abuse first it is their duty to inform the school and provide them with the relevant details. It will be the school's responsibility to pay particular attention to the attendance and development of the child/children and to report any cause for further concern to Social Services. The Social Services in turn should inform the school of any termination of a court order or change in status or placement of the child. If such a child moves school the principal shall be responsible for informing Social Services. All existing Social Service records kept in school will then be destroyed. However, the school will retain its own records indefinitely. We will inform the receiving school that the child is on the child protection register. It is the responsibility of the receiving school to contact Social Services and obtain from them all relevant details.
- (xiv) 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.
- (xv) Where a case of child abuse is suspected Social Services will call a case conference to which the principal and/or the designated teacher after consulting with the relevant member/s of staff may attend. The school will prepare a report for the conference. At all times the report will be based on evidence and be objective. The report may be made available to the child's parents and may be used in court.
- (xvi) When a child is placed on the Child Protection Register a Child Protection Plan will be put in place. The school will monitor the child in accordance with the plan's requirements.
- (xvii) The principal or designated teacher will supplement all records with:
- details of advice sought, when and from whom
 - the decision reached and whether to refer or not
 - how, when and by whom this was done
 - reason for not referring (if applicable)
- All this will be included on the 'Record of Child Abuse Complaints Form'
- (xviii) The school will keep a 'Record of Child Abuse Complaints' which will be made available to Governors on at least one occasion each year.
- (xix) A criminal record check will be carried out on any volunteers or sports coaches assisting the school through AccessNI who will have unsupervised access to children.
- (xx) The school shall, by providing a caring atmosphere where all children are encouraged to care for and consider the feelings and opinions of others, endeavour to begin the development of caring and responsible adults.

Code of Conduct for Employees

Introduction

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

Code of Conduct

1. Private Meetings 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.
- b. Where possible another pupil or preferably another adult should be present or nearby during the interview. The school will take active measures to facilitate this.

2. Physical Contact with Pupils

- a. As a general principle staff will not make unnecessary physical contact with pupils.
- b. It is unrealistic and unnecessary however to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- c. Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is or would be uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- d. Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- e. Staff who have to administer first aid to a pupil should endeavour, whenever 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.
- f. Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- g. 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 designated teacher.
- h. Staff will be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities where more informal relationships tend to be usual

and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment.

3. Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- a. Teachers should avoid teaching materials the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- b. If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material the teacher will consult with the principal before using it.

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 when opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances employees' professional judgement will be exercised. This Code of Conduct only serves to confirm what has always been our practice.

It is however prudent for all staff from time to time to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children and their manner and approach to individual children to ensure they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions to other staff, the children nor their parents.

