ST·DOMINIC'S
VERITAS
FOUNDED 1870
GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Revised November 2026

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

OUR MISSION

Each one of us is unique, created by a unique God, for a unique purpose

VISION STATEMENT

St Dominic's is a community committed to mutual respect where every individual is valued, respected, encouraged and empowered to reach her/his potential in an atmosphere of love, forgiveness, honesty, openness and optimism.

We are committed to celebrating difference, to promoting equality, self-belief and a culture of confidence where success is celebrated. We strive to unlock our individual and collective potential and to be prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century, reflecting our strong Dominican Ethos.

St. Dominic's School is committed to being a self-evaluating and self-improving school

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This policy is one of a number of inter-related policies which are concerned with student welfare. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies should be read in conjunction with the school's pastoral policies, including the 'Positive Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy', the 'Pupil Acceptable Use of ICT' and 'Staff Acceptable Use of ICT' and the 'Relationships and Sexuality Policy'.

It is particularly important that it is read in conjunction with the school's 'Pupil Acceptable Use of ICT' and 'Staff Acceptable Use of ICT' Policies which outline the management of staff and students' use of online materials and ICT resources.

Parents and students need to be aware that whilst the internet provides children and young people with a wealth of opportunities for their education, communication and entertainment, there are also risks of harm through the deliberate behaviour of others online. It is also well known that young people can be exposed to inappropriate content online.

It is estimated that in school, students access approximately 20% of their total internet usage. This means that young people are accessing the majority of online information beyond the school day. The school has procedures in place to safeguard learners from unlawful, sexual or potentially harmful content on the internet. We also offer information on internet safety and the importance of monitoring internet use at home. Parents need to monitor internet use at home and encourage their children to talk with them about any concerning /upsetting material they may come across.

What is Safeguarding?
Safeguarding is broader than child protection. Safeguarding begins with preventative education and activities which enable children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is promoted. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection.

What is Child Protection?
Child protection refers specifically to the acitivity that is taken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.

1.2 RATIONALE

St Dominic's Grammar School has a safeguarding ethos; thus, it is recognised that, not only does the school have statutory responsibilities in relation to students' learning, but it also carries pastoral responsibility towards all students in its care. The school accepts that all students in its charge have a fundamental right to be protected from harm and will seek to do whatever is reasonable to safeguard and promote the safety and well-being of its students.

SECTION 2: CONTEXT

2.1 THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

"Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence; they must be kept safe from harm; and they must be given proper care by those looking after them..... When adults or organisations make decisions which affect children, they must always think first about what would be best for the child".
Extract from United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)

The aim of St. Dominic's Child Protection Policy is to help protect all pupils in our care from harm and to implement safeguarding procedures and child protection arrangements in an accessible way so that they are understood by the students and they know what to do and who to go to.

2.2 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021
- Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2016
- The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008
- The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003
- The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Education (2006 Order) (Commencement No 2) Order (NI) 2007
- Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Health and Safety at Work Order (Northern Ireland) 1978
- The Children (NI) Order 1995

- The Education (NI) Order 1998/25
- Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 (duty to report offences)

2.3 The Policy & Guidance Context

- Pastoral Care in School: Promoting Positive Behaviour (DE, 2001)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools (DE, 2017. Amended 2019. Updated June 2020)
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016)
- Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland (SBNI) Online Regional Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures manual 2017 (updated annually).

2.4 The International Context

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)- Section (A28) sets out every child's right to an education and every child's right to be protected from all types of harm and violence.

SECTION 3: POLICY AIMS

3.1 Ethos

St. Dominic's Grammar School is committed to promoting the welfare of children and young people and keeping them safe from harm, true to the statement set out below. At all times, the school strives to build the pupils' self-esteem enabling them to develop in confidence, resilience and a strong sense of self-worth.

3.2 Specific Aims

- To ensure staff awareness in the area of suspected child abuse. The policy will include a definition of child abuse and guidelines for the identification of suspected abuse.
- To set out clear procedures to be followed by all staff in the case of suspected abuse including
  - the role of individual members of staff
  - the role of the designated teachers
  - subsequent referral to outside agencies
- To ensure that all pupils are safe and that cases of suspected child abuse are appropriately responded to.
- To promote awareness and understanding of the area of child abuse among all stakeholders.

- To set down a clear system for staff training and school procedures.

The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

The Children (NI) Order 1995 reinforces the statutory obligation on the education sector to play its part in the reporting and prevention of child abuse.

3. 3 The Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection

3.3 The Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection from the Department of Education's Guidance 'Safeguarding and Child Protection School' are outlined below.

The following principles underpin all our school strategies, policies, procedures, practice and services relating to safeguarding children and young people. It is the responsibility of all adults working with young people to familiarise themselves with them in order that they act as a guide for all our dealings with the young people in our care.

(i) The child or young person's welfare is paramount

- The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration in all our dealings with students. When making decisions about young people, the school tries its best to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between the child's rights and parents' rights. All efforts are made to work co-operatively with parents, unless doing so is inconsistent with ensuring the child's safety.

(ii) **The voice of the child or young person should be heard**

- In St Dominic's we recognise that young people have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously, taking account of their age and understanding. Through 'Student Voice' and the Student Council, self-evaluative questionnaires and the students' evaluation of policies and pastoral care provision, we aim to consult and involve them in matters and decisions which may affect their lives.

(iii) Partnership

- Safeguarding is a shared responsibility and the most effective way of ensuring that a child's needs are met is throughworking in partnership.

Prevention

- We deliver safeguarding training to all staff where we emphasise the importance of preventing problems occurring or worsening through the introduction of timely supportive measures.

(iv) **Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances**

- Where a young person's needs can be met through the provision of support services, these are provided. All staff must respond proportionately to the needs of a child in accordance with their duties and the powers available to them.

(v) **Protection**

- Children should be safe from harm and in circumstances where a parent or carer is not meeting their needs, they should be protected by the State. It is therefore a legal obligation for all staff in St Dominic's to report any child protection concerns to the designated teachers.

(vi) **Evidence-based and informed decision making**

- All the decisions and actions taken by staff in school must be considered, well informed and based on outcomes that are sensitive to, and take account of, the young person's specific circumstances, risks to which they are exposed, and their assessed need

SECTION 4: DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

4.1 What is Child Abuse?

Definition of Child 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 a residential, hospital or institutional setting or in a 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. Abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

4.2 Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

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

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.

Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

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 foods, 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).

Exploitation

Exploitation [1] 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.

Specific Types of Abuse

Grooming

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.

Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

Adults may misuse online settings e.g. chat rooms, social and gaming environments and other forms of digital communications, to try and establish contact with children and young people or to share information with other perpetrators, which creates a particular problem because this can occur in real time and there is no permanent record of the interaction or discussion held or information shared.

Staff should be alert to signs that may indicate grooming, and report any knowledge or concerns to enable preventative action to be taken, if possible, before harm occurs.

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.

Any child under the age of 18 can be a victim of CSE. Although younger children can experience CSE, the average age at which concerns are first identified is 12-15 years of age. Sixteen and seventeen year olds, although legally able to consent to sexual activity can also be sexually exploited.

CSE can be perpetrated by adults or by young people's peers, on an individual or group basis, or a combination of both, and can be perpetrated by females as well as males.

While children in care are known to experience disproportionate risk of CSE, **the majority of CSE victims are living at home**.

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

This is 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.

Sexual Violence and Abuse

Is 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).

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. 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.
FGM is a form of child abuse and, as such, teachers have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, through agreed and established school procedures.

Forced Marriage

A 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.

Children who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour

Harmful sexualised behaviour is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when there is no informed consent by the victim; and/or the perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim. Harmful sexualised behaviour can include using age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases, inappropriate touching, using sexual violence or threats. Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older - particularly if there is more than two years difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them - for example, if the older child is disabled. Harmful sexualised behaviour must be reported and will always require intervention.

Sexting

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

As adults we can question the wisdom of this but the reality is that children and young people consider this to be normal. Staff and 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 staff must always report any information they have on students involved in sexting.

Sharing an inappropriate image with an intent to cause distress

If a pupil has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that you **do not forward it to anyone else**. Please remember that staff are not required to investigate incidents, they must report them to the DT or DDT.

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 media and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

Safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the pupils in the school or on school-organised activities. Pupils will read and sign the school's 'Acceptable Use of ICT Policy'.

4.3 Possible Indicators of Abuse- Symptoms

School staff are particularly well placed to observe symptoms of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. No list of symptoms can be exhaustive, but below are a number of possible indicators of abuse.

- Bruises or marks may be apparent, particularly when pupils are changing for sports activities.
- Possible indicators of physical neglect such as inadequate clothing, poor hygiene, deficient nutrition and of emotional abuse such as excessive dependence or attention-seeking.
- Young people who are sexually abused may exhibit physical signs or lead to a substantial behaviour change including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate or harmful sexualised behaviour. Young people may also be more frequently absent from school.
- CSE can be very difficult to identify and a young person may not see themselves as a victim. However, it is our statutory responsibility to protect all children and young people from abuse, irrespective of whether or not they view themselves as a victim of abuse. **Professionals need to be able to identify vulnerability in the midst of challenging behaviour and frequent resistance to, or even apparent disregard for, professional support.** Potential indicators can include, acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc. without plausible explanation, leaving school without permission, being collected from school by unknown adults, significantly older boyfriend/girlfriend. While these indicators can be useful in identifying potential risk, their presence does not necessarily mean CSE is occurring. More importantly, nor does their absence mean it is not.

Such symptoms of all the above types of abuse may be due to a variety of other causes, medical or social, such as bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances or drug, alcohol or solvent misuse.

Signs, such as those described above, and others, can do no more than give rise to concern - they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. School staff should be aware of the possible implications of, and alert to, all such signs, particularly if they appear in combination or are regularly repeated.

Where a member of staff is concerned that abuse may have occurred, he/she must report this immediately to the Designated Teacher who has specific responsibility for child protection. ***The designation of a teacher for this purpose should not be seen as diminishing the role of all members of staff in being alert to signs of abuse and being aware of the procedures to be followed,*** including those in cases where an allegation is made against any member of the school's staff, teaching or non-teaching.

A parent or other carer may also give information to a member of staff of the school which gives rise to concern about possible child abuse by someone outside the school, or by a person working in the school in a volunteer capacity. The person making the complaint should be advised of their responsibility to refer to the local Health and Social Care Trust Gateway Team. The school Safeguarding Team will also refer where appropriate and follow school procedures.

Responding to Children with Increased Vulnerabilities and Children with a Disability

Children and young people with disabilities (i.e. any child or young person who has a physical, sensory or learning impairment or a significant health condition) may be more vulnerable to abuse and staff working with children with disabilities should be aware of any vulnerability factors associated with risk of harm,

and any emerging child protection issues. Staff must be aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult.

Gender Identity Issues/Sexual Orientation

Our school strives to provide a happy environment where all young people feel safe and secure. All pupils have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

SECTION 5: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Responsibilities of 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 registered pupils.
- Have a written Child Protection Policy.
- Specifically address the prevention of bullying in school behaviour management policies.

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 places a statutory duty on Boards of Governors to keep a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying involving a registered pupil at the school. To fulfil their responsibilities BoGs are obligated to acknowledge and work within the relevant guidance and procedural documents that have been produced by the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Health (DoH).

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 every term of office (four years). See Section 4.7 for more details on child protection training.

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 can access the policy on the school website.
- The school has an Anti-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 best practice that they receive a termly report of child protection activities). This report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the school, including training for staff.

Chair of Board of Governors

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors is Mr Rory Galway

- The Chairperson of the Board of Governors plays a pivotal role in creating and maintaining the safeguarding ethos within the school environment.

- In the event of a safeguarding and child protection complaint being made against the Principal, it is the Chairperson who must assume lead responsibility for managing the complaint/allegation in keeping with guidance issued by the Department and the school's own policies and procedures.

- The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring child protection records are kept and for signing and dating annually the Record of Child Abuse Complaints against staff, even if there have been no entries.

Safeguarding Team

In the best interests of the children and for support for the Designated Teachers, the school has a Safeguarding Team. This is comprised of the chair of the Board of Governors, the delegated governor, the principal, the Designated Teacher and the Deputy Designated Teacher.

The Safeguarding Team are:

The Chair of Governors- Mr Rory Galway.
The Delegated Governor for Child Protection- Mrs Catherine Finnegan.
The Principal (Chair): Mrs Orla O'Neill
The Designated Teacher for Child Protection - Ms Phyllis Mc Nulty.
The Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection -Ms Aine Braniff and Mrs Joanna Fitzsimons

The Safeguarding Team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding systems throughout the school.

The responsibilities of the team;

- The monitoring and periodic review of Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements in the school.
- Support for the Designated Teacher in the exercise of their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities.

- Ensuring attendance of Governors and staff at relevant training - including refresher training - in keeping with legislative and best practice requirements.

Principal

The Principal is Mrs Orla O'Neill

- The Principal has the overall responsibility for the day to day running of the school including the appointment and management of suitable staff to the designated teacher posts.

- The Principal as the secretary to the Board of Governors the responsibility of making sure that the Board of Governors fulfils their Child Protection duties, keeping them informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to child protection, ensuring termly inclusion of child protection activities on the agenda. They must ensure any circulars or guidance from the Department of Education is shared promptly and ensure the termly inclusion of child protection activities on the BoG meeting agenda. In addition, the Principal takes the lead in managing Child Protection concerns relating to staff.

5.2 Role of Designated Teachers for Child Protection

The Designated Teacher for Child Abuse is Ms Phyllis McNulty

Every school is required to have a Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher with responsibility for Child Protection. This is a highly skilled role developed and supported through specialised training requiring knowledge and professional judgement on complex and emotive issues. It involves:

- The induction and training of all school staff including support staff in safeguarding and CP
- Being available to discuss the child protection concerns of any member of staff
- Responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns
- Making referral to Social Services or PSNI Care Units
- Maintaining a current awareness of other local services
- Liaison with the Education Authority Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Keeping the school Principal informed
- The lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy
- Promotion of a child protection ethos in the school
- Written reports to the Board of Governors regarding child protection
- Notifying the following of child protection referrals:

    (i) The Child Protection Support Service for Schools
    (ii) The Chair of the Board of Governors in St Dominic's which is a voluntary grammar school.

5.3 The Role of the Deputy Designated Teachers

The Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection are Ms Aine Braniff and Mrs Joanna Fitzsimons

The role of the Deputy Designated Teacher is to work co-operatively with the DT in fulfilling her responsibilities. It is also to support and undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection as required.

SECTION 6: PROCEDURES

6.1 Reporting Process - Procedure for Reporting an Incident of Child Abuse

- Role of individual members of staff
- Role of designated teacher
- Referral to outside agencies

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

↓

- Member of staff refers matter to designated teacher, discuss with designated teacher.
- Designated teacher seeks further clarification from pupil as needed and records all relevant information.

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Principal/Designated teacher makes referral to:

- Gateway
- Copies of pro-forma to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors
- Copies to Education Authority

If there is any doubt about whether to take further action, advice is available from:

- Social Services
- EA Designated Officer

Or other agencies.

When seeking advice, names need not be given. At this stage it is simply an enquiry.

Other Action:

- Record Advice given using the 'Note of Concern' Proforma (Appendix 3);
- Monitor
- Review

6.2 GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

- Any allegation by a child that she is suffering or has suffered abuse, should be treated seriously. When a child volunteers such information, the chief task at this stage is to *listen* to the child and make a written record of the discussion to pass on to the designated teacher.

- When teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek *clarification* from the child, with tact and understanding. It is *not* the responsibility of staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected child abuse.

- Any comment by the child or subsequently by a parent or carer or other adult about how an injury occurred, should be written down, as soon as possible afterwards, preferably quoting words actually used. Records made by a member of staff must be objective, factual and detailed; these records are to be given to the designated teacher to be filed in a secure place. Staff should also be aware that their notes may need to be use in any subsequent court proceedings.

- Staff should *not* give the child or young person undertakings of confidentiality, although they can, and should, reassure them that information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know.

Protecting Children – a duty to care - Dealing with Disclosure - 6 Things to Do

RECEIVE – listen to what a child says but do not ask leading questions.
REASSURE – ensure the child is reassured that she will be safe and her interests come first.
REACT – only to ensure that the child is safe and secure. Do not use physical contact.
RECORD – make note of what you have seen or heard and the date and time.
REPORT – report to the Designated Teacher as soon as you have any concern for the child.
RELAX – access support for yourself.

(Detailed advice is outlined below in the and in the appendices)

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF TALKING TO CHILDREN WHERE THERE ARE CONCERNS ABOUT POSSIBLE ABUSE

- Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the school's non-teaching staff sees such signs, she should immediately bring them to the attention of either the class teacher or the Designated Teacher, and it may be appropriate for the necessary clarification to be carried out by the teacher.

- Such clarification may reassure teachers that abuse has not occurred; but signs and symptoms which cause concern, while perhaps not a result of abuse, may nevertheless indicate that the child or her family is in need of support by statutory, voluntary or community based services through a 'child in need' referral (with parental consent).

- Care must be taken in asking, and interpreting children's responses to, questions about indications of abuse. The same considerations apply when a child makes an allegation of abuse, or volunteers information which amounts to that. In some circumstances, talking to the child will quickly clarify initial concerns into a suspicion that abuse has occurred, and point to the need for an immediate referral. Staff should be aware that the way in which they talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings, and the extent of questioning should, therefore, be kept to a minimum. Staff should not ask the child leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind.

- Staff should not, therefore, ask questions which encourage the child to change their version of events in any way, or which impose the adult's own assumptions. For example, staff should say, 'Tell me what has happened', rather than, 'Did they do X to you?'.

- The priority at this stage is to actively listen to the child, and not to interrupt or try to interpret if they are freely recalling significant events *(the child must not be asked to unnecessarily recount the experience of abuse)*, and as soon as possible afterwards to make a record of the discussion to pass on to the Designated Teacher, using the pro-forma (Appendix 3).

- The note should record the time, date, place and people who were present, as well as what was said. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail, but *under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed nor a photograph taken*.

- Any comment by the child, or subsequently by a parent or carer or other adult, about how an injury occurred, should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, quoting words actually used.

- Staff should not give the child or young person undertakings of confidentiality, although they can and should, of course, reassure them that information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know.

- Staff should also be aware that their note of the discussion may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings. It should be emphasised that lack of proper records will not, of itself, exempt the school from any subsequent requirement to give evidence in court. *It is therefore essential that accurate contemporaneous records are maintained*.

- Staff should **not** ask the child to write an account of their disclosure for the record.

6.3 WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REFERRAL IS MADE? ROLES OF OTHER AGENCIES

The welfare of the child is paramount and the following interagency procedures are intended to ensure a prompt and co-ordinated response to any referral.

Referral Made
↓
Enquiries by Investigating Agencies
↓
Strategy discussion be held with Social Services and Police takes place and a joint strategy agreed
↓

Immediate child protection action	Child Protection investigation	No further child protection action
	↓	
	Child Protection action	
	↓	
	Initial Case Conference	
	↓	
Support Service	Registration	No registration No further C.P. action
	↓	
	Assessment & Child Protection Plan	
	↓	
	Review Case Conference	
	↓	
Remove name from Child Protection Register and continued involvement	Continued Registration	Remove name from Child Protection Register and no further action

Staff may be called upon to attend the initial strategy discussion and any subsequent case conferences. In more serious cases, staff may be required to assist in the preparation of a Court Report and may be asked to appear in court.

6.4 OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS CONCERNS, OR HAS BEEN GIVEN INFORMATION ABOUT ABUSE BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN A MEMBER OF STAFF

1. 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 an identified risk to the child at home.
2. The member of staff completes the Note of Concern on what has been observed or shared and must ACT PROMPTLY.
3. The source of concern is notified that the school will follow up appropriately on the issues raised.
4. The staff member discusses concerns with the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher in her absence and provides note of concern.
5. Designated teacher should consult with the Principal or other relevant staff before deciding upon action to be taken, always taking care to avoid undue delay.
6. If **Child Protection referral is not required** The school may consider other options including monitoring the situation within an agreed timescale; signposting or referring the child/parent/carers to appropriate support services such as the Children's Services Gateway Team or local Family Support Hub with parental consent, and child/young person's consent (where appropriate).
7. **If Child Protection referral is required** The Designated Teacher seeks consent of the parent/carer and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm, then telephones the Children's Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI if a child is at immediate risk. She submits a completed UNOCINI referral form within 24 hours. Designated Teacher clarifies/discusses concern with child/ parent/carers and decides with the Principal if a referral is or is not required.

DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST A MEMBER OF STAFF

KEY POINTS

Lead individual learns of an allegation against a member of staff and informs the Chair/Vice Chair of BoG as appropriate.

GUIDANCE ON NEXT STEPS

Lead individual then establishes the facts, seeks advice from the key agencies as appropriate, usually through informal discussion.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Following on from establishing the facts, the DT/DDT seeks advice from Key Agencies and discussion with the Chair and/or BoG to agree a way forward from the options below.

(i) Precautionary suspension is not appropriate and the matter is concluded.

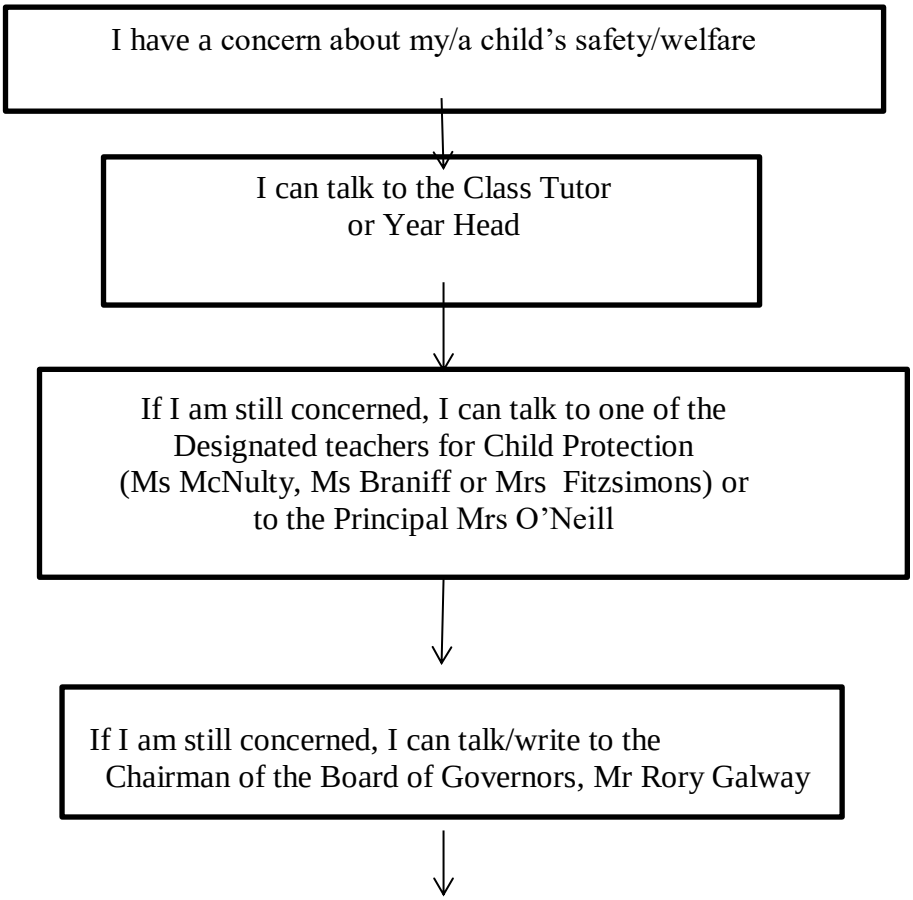
(ii) Allegation addressed through relevant disciplinary procedures.

(iii) Precautionary suspension under Child Protection procedures put in place.

(iv) Alternatives to precautionary suspension put in place.

CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN

Parents'/Guardians' guide to raising a concern/making a complaint including a complaint against a member of staff or volunteer



If you have escalated your concern as set out in the above flowchart, and are of the view that it has not been addressed satisfactorily, you may revert to the school's complaints policy. This policy should culminate in the option for you to contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) who has the legislative power to investigate your complaint.

In the case of a parent/guardian making a child abuse complaint against an adult working in the school, the parent/guardian should raise the complaint with the Principal who will take appropriate action. In the case of a Child Abuse Complaint against the Principal, the parent/guardian should contact the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Chair of the Board of Governors.

6.5 Vetting procedures and details of the safe requirement measures used

St Dominic's uses vetting checks as a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals access to students in school. All persons on school property are vetted, inducted in safeguarding systems or supervised as appropriate.

Staff Members - All staff, paid and unpaid are vetted using Access NI.

The following groups must have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) from Access NI **before** taking up post:

-All new **paid** teaching and non-teaching staff.

-Examination Invigilators.

-Private contracted transport providers - named drivers.

Volunteers

There are two types of volunteers working in schools: those who work unsupervised and those who work under supervision. Volunteers who work unsupervised have an EDC. A volunteer who works under supervision is not required to obtain an EDC, but the school ensures that a member of staff remains with them.
Schools must ensure that volunteers, eg coaches, music tutors, school photographers etc, who are employed by others, have the necessary clearances in place and a record of these should be maintained by the Principal.

The practice in the school is for volunteers to be supervised at all times.

Otherwise, those working in the school in a voluntary capacity will be subject to the usual staff vetting procedures and will be inducted in school policies and procedures by a permanent member of staff.

Coaches, and music tutors, school photographers etc., who are employed by others, have the necessary clearances in place and are given Safeguarding and Child Protection training by the DTs.

Guidelines for volunteers

Volunteers
A volunteer should immediately inform the member of staff with whom she/he is working in the event of a pupil making a disclosure of harm.

Work Experience Placements
Those coming into the school on work experience will not be left unsupervised with children at any time – and will be inducted in the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Extended Schools
Either the Principal, Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership team will be present in the school from 8am and until 4.30pm on any day when pupils are attending after-school activities.

In case of emergency

If a member of staff finds himself/herself to be the only adult in the school and has a child protection issue s/he should contact social services Gateway Team on 02890 507000

The Preventative Curriculum

The personal development curriculum gives specific attention to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships and sexuality education, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. For example, the students attend workshops on wellbeing delivered by the Samaritans, the Action Mental Health agency, MenSsana, Women's Aid and the NI Eating Disorders Association. The PSHE programme is designed to offer a medium to explore sensitive issues with students across the key stages in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours.

"Keeping safe messages" are delivered throughout the programme and supported by workshops delivered by the PSNI on internet safety and personal safety and road safety. The promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing of pupils within and across the broader school community is achieved by raising awareness of social, emotional, and health issues, developing the confidence, resiliencies and coping skills of pupils, throughout the PSHE programme and in offering early intervention when pupils are experiencing difficulties.

The RSE programme also informs students about how to develop healthy relationships, and to make informed choices in their lives so that they learn how to stay safe and know who to turn to if in need of support.

All pupils receive training in the safe use of the internet and the issues of personal safety, respect for others and respect for self are addressed throughout the pastoral programme. The Community Police Officer is invited to speak to students in relation to personal safety and self-protection.

6.6 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

All adults in St. Dominic's are placed in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. Members of staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and gender of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff are dealing with adolescent pupils. Sexual offences, sexual insults or sexual discrimination (including gender or sexual orientation) against pupils, are inappropriate and illegal, as indeed is any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with, or towards a student.

Schools must safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in their charge, therefore the conduct of school staff towards their pupils must be above reproach. The following advice is designed to reduce the risk of allegations being made against any member of staff.

- Staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.

- Pupils should be addressed formally by their Christian name. Familiar terms e.g. darling, pet, which are not appropriate in a professional context, should be avoided.

- Staff must be aware of the potential risks which can arise from private interviews with individual pupils. There are occasions when confidential interviews must take place, but such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access or with the door open or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people. It is inadvisable to spend undue amounts of time with one pupil, away from other people.

- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff should ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.

- Where possible, another student or adult should be present or nearby during the meeting.

- All allegations of bullying and bullying incidents must be reported to the DT or DDT. Staff must record all allegations or incidents of bullying on the reporting from contained in the school's 'Anti-Bullying Policy'.

- Where possible, staff should not be alone in a vehicle with a child.

- Staff need to be aware of the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with pupils, and must bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued. On rare occasions, a teacher might have to restrain a pupil physically, to prevent her causing injury to herself or others or to property. In such instances, no more than the minimum necessary force should be used – and this should be reocrded following school process.

- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

- If a member of staff has to administer first aid, ensure, where possible, that this is done in the presence of other students or another adult. **However, in an emergency, staff should not hesitate to administer first aid, even if there is not another person present.**

- All young people have the right to be treated with respect.

- Staff need to be alert to the risk of emotional abuse, such as persistent or vindictive sarcasm, verbal bullying or severe and persistent negative comment or actions. Members of staff should be encouraged to reflect on any aspect of their contact with children which may give rise to perceptions or allegations of this form of abuse.

- Teachers should avoid using teaching materials of a sensitive nature which could be misinterpreted.

- If in doubt about the suitability of a particular teaching resource, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

- The school operates a filtered system to the Internet to ensure that only appropriate resources can be accessed.

- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising children in a residential setting such as a ski-trip, outdoor education camp or an extended visit away from home, where relationships tend to be less formal and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment. Professional relationships are expected at all times.

- Following any incident where a teacher feels that his/her actions have been or may be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal of the school. This would apply especially in a case where a teacher had been obliged to restrain a child physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or self-injury.

- If any allegations are made against a member of staff, details must be recorded and reported to the designated teacher/ Principal immediately.

- Where concern arises about inappropriate behaviour by another adult in the school, it is essential that this is reported to the designated teacher/Principal.

- All allegations of a potential child abuse nature **must** be recorded in the school's *Record of Child Abuse Complaints Log* which is retained securely in the Principal's Office. A record of such a concern / allegation is placed on the student's Child Protection file.

  The school's *Record of Child Abuse Complaints Log* is signed annually by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

- The school receives written permission from parents of students starting school to take photographs of pupils for school records, for displays around the school, for the school magazine, prospectus and web site.

- Staff should receive parental consent before any photograph of a child under the age of 18 is passed onto an outside agency.

On receiving a complaint against a member of staff, the Principal
- Seeks discreet preliminary clarification of the complaint
- Informs the designated teacher
- Records the complaint
- Consults with the EA Child Protection Support Service
- Consults with Chair of Board of Governors

If the complaint comes to the designated teacher, they will pass it to the Principal who will follow the steps listed above.

Possible decisions

- If the allegation is without substance, no further action
- If concerns remain, preliminary suspension/move from direct contact duties
- Immediate referral to Social Services/P.S.N.I.
- In a case of inappropriate behaviour, the Principal applies the school's disciplinary procedures

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF IN RELATION TO MOBILE PHONE USAGE

- Staff use of mobile phones during their working school day should be outside of their contact hours and discreet and appropriate e.g. not in the presence of children.
- Members of staff are not permitted to make/receive calls/text during lesson time.
- Mobile phones should be set to silent/vibrate while on school premises, other than in the staffroom.
- If it is necessary to make or answer a call then it should be done so in a private area.
- Whilst at meetings, staff should turn their phones to silent. They should not answer their mobile whilst in a meeting.
- In a one to one situation, phones should be switched off completely.
- If staff have a private circumstance that may necessitate receiving a call, the Principal/Vice-Principal should be informed that the staff member has their phone on. Where possible, they should have an arrangement with a colleague to be able to step in and supervise the class.
- Staff should never contact pupils or parents from their personal mobile phone on school related business, or give their mobile phone number to pupils or parents. If a member of staff needs to make telephone contact with a parent/carer, the school telephone or school mobile phone should be used.
- Staff should never send to, or accept from, colleagues, parents or pupils, texts or images that could be viewed as inappropriate.
- With regard to camera mobile phones, a member of staff should never use their phone to photograph children or allow themselves to be photographed by a child.
- During group outings, staff may carry the school's mobile phone for use in an emergency with the number left in the school office.
- The school also appreciates the fact that staff will use their own mobile phones as emergency contact tools when on trips and outings. In these instances it may be unavoidable that mobile phones are used in the presence of pupils.
- Staff should consider the needs/workload of their colleagues at all times when using a mobile phone in a common staffing area.
- Staff are not, at any time, permitted to use recording equipment on their mobile phones, for example: to take recordings of children, or to share images.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF IN RELATION TO E-SAFETY AND INTERNET USE

- Staff must exercise reasonable caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Staff must give regard to the 'Staff Acceptable Use of ICT Policy' at all times both inside and outside of work.

- There should be no communication of a personal nature by text, e-mail, mobile phone or use of social media. This has been included to safeguard pupils and the safety and professional integrity of school staff. C2k email should only be used for Learning and Teaching purposes.

- Staff should exercise caution in their use of social media or any other web based presence that they may have. Contact with students must be via school authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal phone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with students.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF IN RELATION TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Staff in the school often have access to personal information about individual pupils and their family circumstances. All staff are expected to treat this with the utmost integrity and adhere to the following:

- Staff should maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality with respect to student and staff records and other sensitive matters. They should take care not to discuss issues of particularly sensitive matters within the school community which could cause distress to school, staff, pupils or parents/carers;
- Staff should seek advice from a senior member of staff if in any doubt about sharing information they hold or which has been requested of them. Confidentiality must always be respected;
- Teachers are expected to keep all written confidential information secure and dispose of any documents which would identify personal information about an individual by shredding it. The school office will facilitate this;
- Data Protection Act: it is the responsibility of all employees to ensure the school's compliance with the Data Protection Act. Personal data must only be used to assist you to carry out your work; it must not be given to people who have no right to see it. All staff should maintain the security of all computerised databases of information on individuals, whether they are staff, pupils or members of the general public. Staff should refer any queries to the Principal.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in regards to a Child Protection matter and this must always be referred to the Designated Child Protection Teacher or her Deputy.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF IN RELATION TO CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK

Whilst St. Dominic's fully respects the right of staff to a private social life in the community it is important that staff bear in mind the following:

- Their own professional standing in the community and therefore avoid any behaviour in public which could undermine their professional reputation.
- Staff who are not related to pupils, are strongly advised not to socialise with pupils out of school hours other than at organised school events – mindful that this could lead to very serious personal and professional consequences. Exceptions to this could include staff members who are related to pupils or where they are close family friends. Professional standards are expected at all times.

The Board of Governors of St. Dominic's High School indemnifies its employees who act in accordance with the procedures and guidelines as set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

SECTION 7: APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Extract from the Anti-Bullying Policy, including procedures for reporting incidents

PREVENTION OF BULLYING

In St Dominic's Grammar School, we strive to create and maintain a safe environment for students and staff and acknowledge the support which parents provide in meeting this aim. Parents and teachers may assist in the prevention of bullying by teaching students to have control over their words and actions.

Within the school community it is important that:

- students who are being bullied, or others who know about it, feel that they will be listened to and that that any action taken will be sensitive and appropriate;
- good behaviour is valued and bullying considered unacceptable;
- a proactive approach is taken and, when possible, early intervention occurs;
- premises are monitored regularly;
- students are taught to assume responsibility for self and for others;
- good relationships are encouraged and that, through both the academic and the pastoral curriculum, students are taught about caring and empathic relationships;
- aggression control is encouraged and acts of aggression are not tolerated; and
- sensitive, empowering help and support is provided for students when required.

Special Educational Needs, Disabilities or English as a Second Language

Students with Special Educational Needs, disabilities or those who are not fluent in English may be especially vulnerable and should be safeguarded in the same manner as other students. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator may have an important role to play in this context. Extra care should be taken to ensure that these students feel confident and are able to discuss any matters that might be worrying them.

The Role of Senior Students

A number of Year 13 and 14 students are selected annually to act as Form Mentors to younger students. In addition, a number of senior students are selected to act as Academic Mentors. Under the supervision of staff, the Year 13 and 14 Pastoral Team offers peer support and engages in awareness-raising throughout the year. The work of the Year 13 and 14 Pastoral Team is highly valued by the school. These students receive training to equip them for the task.

The Student Voice provides students with an opportunity to have their voice heard.

The Role of Staff

Each member of staff has a pastoral responsibility towards the young people in their charge. Members of staff are encouraged to avail of appropriate training, to follow procedures and to handle suspected incidents in a fair, sensitive, diplomatic and firm manner.

RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF BULLYING

Members of staff and parents/guardians should watch for signs of distress in students. Possible symptoms that a young person is experiencing bullying may include:

- a pattern of physical illness e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- anxiety about travelling to and from school;
- reluctance to come to school;
- changes in temperament and/or behaviour e.g. a tendency to become more emotional, upset or angry than usual;
- signs of anxiety or distress e.g. sleep disturbance, not eating, weeping, stammering;
- unexplained damage to, or loss of, possessions and/or clothing;
- unexplained bruising or cuts;
- increased requests for and/or stealing money;
- decline in quality of school work for no obvious reason;
- the desire to remain with adults;
- fear of using the internet or mobile phone, nervous and jumpy when a cyber-message is received.

Individually, such signs and symptoms do not necessarily mean that a student is being bullied. However, if there is a combination or repetitive occurrence of these, then further investigation is needed in order to determine what is affecting the student.

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF BULLYING WITH STUDENTS

Staff, students and parents have a shared responsibility in any proactive strategy to sustain a positive ethos and to counteract bullying. In St Dominic's Grammar School, as part of the defined, evolving and responsive pastoral programme, emphasis is placed on the prevention of bullying. The issue of bullying is included in PSHE programmes.

Class Tutors explore with their students issues such as:

- the unacceptable nature of bullying behaviour;
- forms of bullying including bystander bullying;
- possible impacts on the target, perceived bully, bystanders and school community;
- the collective responsibility to ensure that bullying does not take place; and
- strategies to prevent bullying.

Students discuss many facets of relationships, such as: relating well with others; peer pressure; peer support; dealing with difficult situations; personal safety. Assemblies are used to promote a positive ethos and anti-bullying culture.
Parents/Guardians should contact their daughter's Class Tutor or Year Head if they are concerned about bullying.

ADVICE GIVEN TO STUDENTS

We regard our school as an open, caring community and there is a range of staff available to listen and to counsel. No-one must suffer in silence and nobody should remain silent if they witness bullying in school. We are a listening and responding school which encourages and supports a 'telling' culture: TELL, LISTEN, ACT.

We encourage students who witness bullying behaviour to:

- tell a teacher, another adult or mentor in the school;
- tell their parents/guardians;
- describe accurately what happened.

Rather than viewing this as 'telling tales', students are encouraged to view such action as a matter of protecting personal safety, or the safety of others. Each person has the right to be safe from harassment or attacks.

ACTION TAKEN BY SCHOOL

The School values behaviour that sustains a positive ethos and which counters bullying. Students are expected to treat each other with empathy and respect. However, each member of staff, including lunchtime supervisors, support staff, teachers and others, should be alert to the signs of bullying and treat any concerns or suspicions seriously and sensitively. Observed incidents or suspicions should be reported as soon as possible to the relevant Class Tutor, Year Head or member of Senior Staff who will follow procedures. The approach taken is to support and protect the targeted student and to focus on changing the behaviour of the bully/ies and those who collude with her/them.

Staff Witnessing a Bullying Incident

If a member of staff witnesses a bullying incident they should, as far as the situation allows:

- remove the targeted student from the scene as quickly as possible and without challenging the person suspected of performing the bullying behaviours. This may prevent escalation of the situation;

- listen to and offer support to the targeted student;

- ensure that the targeted student is safe; she may be taken, for example, to her Class Tutor, Year Head, or the First Aid Room;

- ensure that the person suspected of exhibiting bullying behaviour is safe; she may be taken, for example, to her Class Tutor, Year Head or returned to class, telling her that the matter will be dealt with later, without specifying how or when. If physical violence or a threat of physical violence has been involved, the perpetrator should be isolated until events have been investigated;

- report the incident to the relevant Class Tutor, Year Head, Vice-Principal or Principal, without delay;

- offer pastoral support to all students involved.

Staff in Receipt of a Report from a Student who is the Alleged Victim

If a student who is the alleged target reports an incident or concern to a member of staff, the details will be recorded and the Year Head contacted as soon as possible. The Year Head will seek agreement as required to speak with the alleged victim. Depending on circumstance, this may involve parental consultation.

The Year Head will:

- inform the interviewee that a record will be kept of alleged events (using the Report of Bullying Incident Form see Appendix 4);

- listen to the alleged target in a calm, non-judgmental way and reassure her that the matter is being taken seriously and will be dealt with;

- meet with individual witnesses, if applicable, to clarify events, informing them that a record will be kept of alleged events (using the Report of Bullying Incident Form);

- if considered serious enough, inform the parents/guardians in order that they may support their child and the school; arrange an interview if appropriate. Should the student request that this does not happen, this should be noted in the written records and the opinion of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or Deputy sought. The DT or DDT may use their discretion in this matter.

- arrange to meet with the alleged target at the next available opportunity to plan a self-protective strategy to help her to deal confidently with any possible recurrence;

- in the short term, arrange to see this student at regular intervals to provide support. The Class Tutor may be involved in monitoring the situation;

- ensure that the Class Tutor and Vice-Principal are made aware of the incident and action taken. Together with the Vice-Principal, a decision will be taken as to whether the Principal and subject teachers should be informed. The student has the right to know which members of staff have been informed; and

- continue to monitor and review the situation, including the effectiveness of the agreed support plan.

Staff in Receipt of a Report from a Student who is not the Alleged Victim

If a student who is not the alleged victim reports an incident or concern to a member of staff, the details will be recorded and the Year Head contacted as soon as possible. The Class Tutor or Year Head will meet with the student who has reported the incident and clarify details.

The Class tutor or Year Head will:

- inform the interviewee that a record will be kept of alleged events (Report of Bullying Incident Form);

- listen to the interviewee in a calm, non-judgmental way, assure the student that she has done the right thing by reporting the incident and reassure her that the matter is being taken seriously and will be dealt with.

Once the details are established, the Year Head will seek agreement as required to speak with the alleged target. Depending on circumstance, this may involve parental consultation.

The Year Head will:

- inform the interviewee that a record will be kept of alleged events (Report of Bullying Incident Form);

- listen to the alleged target in a calm, non-judgmental way and reassure her that the matter is being taken seriously and will be dealt with;

- meet with individual witnesses, if applicable, to clarify events. Witnesses should be informed that a record will be kept of alleged events;

- if considered serious enough, inform the parents/guardians in order that they may support their child and the school and arrange an interview if appropriate. Should the student request that this does not happen, this should be noted in the written records and the opinion of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or Deputy sought. The DT or DDT may use their discretion in this matter.

- arrange to meet with the alleged target to plan a self-protective strategy to help her to deal confidently with any possible recurrence;

- in the short term, arrange to see this student at regular intervals to provide support. The Class Tutor may be involved in monitoring the situation;

- ensure that the Class Tutor and Vice-Principal are made aware of the incident and the action taken. Together with the Vice-Principal, a decision will be taken as to whether the Principal and subject teachers should be informed. The student has the right to know which members of staff have been informed; and

- continue to monitor and review the situation, including the effectiveness of the agreed support plan.

Possible Sources of Support for Alleged Target

Students who have been targeted, may benefit from the counselling service offered within School. This may include, for example, assertiveness skills training or a programme to build or re-build self-esteem.

The Year Head may identify a member of staff and/or a peer mentor or other suitable person as a point of referral for the student. The Year Head may seek to find a reliable friend or group to accompany the student and report any incidents which may occur.

If it is possible to identify times and places where incidents are occurring, the Year Head may seek to implement strategies to minimise opportunities for such behaviour. When appropriate, staff will be given specific advice regarding strategies to be used to reduce the likelihood of such incidents re-occurring e.g. changing seating arrangements in class.

Actions in Relation to a Student who is Alleged to Have Displayed Bullying Behaviours

The Class Tutor/Year Head will meet with this student, as soon as possible after interviewing the student who reported the bullying, to further clarify events surrounding the incident.

The Class Tutor/Year Head will:

- as far as possible, respect the confidentiality of the person reporting the incident and any witnesses;

- inform the interviewee that a record will be kept of alleged events (using the Report of Bullying Incident Form);

- provide the student with an opportunity to give her point of view and explain her actions;

- listen in a calm, non-judgmental way and, if it is clear that bullying behaviour has occurred, stress that it is the behaviour, not the student herself, which is unacceptable;

- attempt to negotiate the situation whereby the student accepts responsibility for any harm/hurt or damage and facilitates recompense/reconciliation being made;

- suggest acceptable forms of behaviour and highlight any good behaviour demonstrated by the student. Agree behaviour targets and set any relevant sanctions;

- if considered sufficiently serious, inform the parents/guardians and arrange an interview to confirm the action being taken (behaviour targets, sanctions, support);

- in the short term, arrange to see the student at regular intervals to provide support. The Class Tutor may be involved in monitoring the situation;

- ensure that the Class Tutor and Vice-Principal are made aware of the incident and action taken. Together with the Vice-Principal, a decision will be taken as to whether the Principal and subject teachers should be informed. The student has the right to know which members of staff have been informed; and

- continue to monitor and review the situation, including the effectiveness of the agreed support plan.

Possible Sources of Support for Alleged Bully

Students who have employed bullying actions against others, or who have been involved in 'bystander bullying' may benefit from the counselling service offered within the school.

The Year Head may identify a member of staff and/or a peer mentor or other suitable person as a point of referral for the student.

If it is possible to identify times and places where incidents are occurring, the Year Head may seek to implement strategies to minimise opportunities for such behaviour. When appropriate, staff will be given specific advice regarding strategies to be used to reduce the likelihood of such incidents re-occurring e.g. changing seating arrangements in class.

Disciplinary Steps

Once behaviour has been adjudged to be bullying behaviour, the Year Head or Vice-Principal will determine the severity of the incident level and the appropriate level of response (see Table 1). In determining the level of severity, a number of factors will be considered, for example: nature; frequency; duration; perceptions of the targeted student; whether or not the targeted student acted provocatively. It should be noted that each suspected bullying incident should be individually assessed and an intervention selected which best meets individual student needs. Certain actions, such as assault, have a particular legal status.

Thereafter:

- the student/s who displayed bullying behaviour will be warned of the implications of their actions; it may be deemed appropriate to apply sanctions. This may include making amends as well as the application of sanctions as laid out in the School Behaviour Policy. As each case will be different, sanctions applied will be tailored to suit the situation;

- relevant intervention strategies will be implemented;

- the situation will be monitored by relevant staff member/s;

- if bullying behaviour recurs, parents/guardians of the student/s will normally be asked to attend for interview and further sanctions may be applied;

- if the bullying behaviour persists, the parents/guardians of the student/s will be asked to attend an interview with the Principal and suspension of the student will be considered.

- A one-off event of bullying which is deemed very serious will invoke a suspension or suspension leading to expulsion.

Appendix 2 – E-safety - All pupils and parents are given advice and guidance on the safe use of the internet via presentations, workshops, advice in the Parents' Handbook and letters

E-safety –Information for staff and parents

We have developed the following rules to ensure the privacy and safety of pupils when using the Internet and World Wide Web. Please understand them.

Website

- Pupils are only referred to by first initial and surnames on our web pages.
- Any images of pupils will not be labelled with their names.

E-mail & Internet Use

- Children and staff will never reveal their personal details, and home address and telephone numbers on the web or in dialogue with other Internet users.
- Pupils do not have individual e-mail addresses. (*All email addresses are C2K addresses)*
- All e-mail to classes will be moderated by the Class teacher.
- Pupils will not engage in conversation or dialogue with other users on the Internet without permission or supervision from their teacher.
- Children have no access to Newsgroups.
- Children are allowed to use the provided internet and e-mail facilities for curricular use only.
- All Internet access at School is filtered to screen undesirable sites at source – this facility must only be disabled by the ICT coordinator.

Reporting Concerns

- Any child finding herself uncomfortable or upset by anything she discovers on the Internet should report it to a teacher immediately.

A note to parents: - The school recognises that, under certain circumstances, the Internet can give children access to undesirable information and images. We have done all that is possible to ensure children are protected from such information through the use of security software, limiting of features and the construction of a website that provide as safe an environment as possible. The children are taught to use the facility sensibly and with proper consideration for others.
It is recommended that parents using Internet at home with pupils develop a similar set of rules.

Use of Pupil Images

At St. Dominic's we take the issue of child safety very seriously, and this includes the use of images of pupils. Including images of pupils in school publications and on the school website can be motivating for the pupils involved, and provide a good opportunity to promote the work of the school. However, schools have a duty of care towards pupils, which means that pupils must remain unidentifiable, reducing the risk of inappropriate contact, if images are used in this way.

We ask that parents consent to the school taking and using photographs and images of their children. Any use of pupil images at St. Dominic's is underpinned by our school ICT Policy/ICT Safety document. We will never include the full name of the pupil alongside an image.

Use of Digital Video

Digital video is an exciting new medium which can motivate and inspire pupils. Research has shown that using digital video in education can help encourage creativity, motivate and enthuse pupils, and improve communication and team-working skills.

St. Dominic's may use digital video. We ask that parents consent to their child taking part in the production of digital video, and/or appearing in films that will subsequently appear in the public domain. Whereas the risks of using video in education are minimal, schools have a duty of care toward pupils. This means that pupils will remain unidentifiable, reducing the risk of inappropriate contact, if images or examples of their work (including digital video) are used on the school website. All digital video work at St. Dominic's is underpinned by our ICT Policy/ICT Safety document.

Extract from policy on safe use of the Internet

St. Dominic's recognises the importance and potential of ICT to enhance learning and is committed to developing the use of ICT as a learning tool for all pupils. We wish our pupils have to access to, and maximise the potential of internet and digital technologies but are mindful of the need to ensure that we promote safe and acceptable working practices for all staff and pupils. This policy is in line with the guidance for Acceptable Use of the Internet and Digital Technologies in Schools (DENI Circular Number 2007/1)

1. For Staff and Pupils

a) Pupils are responsible for their own behaviour in the use of ICT just as they are in the classroom or a school corridor. General school rules apply. In addition, a number of rules relating to use of ICT also apply.

b) St. Dominic's has implemented a filtered Internet and e-mail service through C2K. Pupils are not permitted to use any other e-mail service during use of the Internet in school.

c) Staff and students at St. Dominic's should know and understand that no ICT user is permitted to:

- retrieve, send, copy or display offensive messages or pictures;
- use obscene or racist language;
- harass, insult or attack others;
- damage computers, computer systems or computer networks;
- damage any ICT equipment
- violate copyright laws;
- use another user's password;
- trespass in another user's folders, work or files;
- intentionally waste resources (such as on-line time and consumables);
- use the network for unapproved commercial purposes;
- access inappropriate / unacceptable sites;

d) Access to the use of ICT requires parental permission and a signed declaration by pupils agreeing to the school rules for use of ICT.

e) St. Dominic's will ensure that all pupils understand how they are to use ICT appropriately and why the rules exist.

f) ICT is provided for pupils to conduct research and communicate with others.
While the use of information and communication technologies is a required aspect of the statutory Northern Ireland Curriculum, access to ICT remains a privilege and not a right. It is given to pupils who act in a considerate and responsible manner, and shall be withdrawn if they fail to maintain acceptable standards of use.

g) During school hours teachers will guide pupils towards appropriate materials. However, it is at all times the pupil's responsibility to ensure that only appropriate material is accessed. Outside school hours families bear responsibility for such guidance as they must also exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, movies, radio, and other potentially offensive media.

h) When using ICT at St. Dominic's, all users must comply with all copyright, libel, fraud, discrimination and obscenity laws or other statutory obligations.

2. Sanctions

a) Violation of the above rules shall result in a temporary or permanent ban of use of the network.
b) Parents/guardians shall be informed.
c) Disciplinary action will be taken in line with existing school rules on inappropriate behaviour.
d) Where applicable, police or local authorities may be involved.
e) Serious or persistent misuse of ICT equipment may result in a situation where the nature or the gravity of the offence is such that, in the judgement of the Board of Governors, expulsion is the only remedy.

Appendix 3-Incident Report Forms

PROFORMA

CONFIDENTIAL

NOTE OF CONCERN

CHILD PROTECTION RECORD - REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER

Name of Pupil:
Year Group:
Date, location, time of incident / disclosure:
Circumstances of incident / disclosure:
Nature and description of concern:
Parties involved, including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom:

Action taken at the time:
Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:
Any further action taken:
Written report passed to Designated Teacher: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ If 'No' state reason:
Date and time of report to the Designated Teacher:
Written note from staff member placed on pupil's Child Protection file ☐ If 'No' state reason:
Name of staff member making the report:_____ Signature of Staff Member: _____ Date: _____ Signature of Designated Teacher: _____ Date:_____

Appendix 5 Policy Statement for Parents' Handbook

SAFEGUARDING and CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

"Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence; they must be kept safe from harm; and they must be given proper care by those looking after them..... When adults or organisations make decisions which affect children, they must always think first about what would be best for the child".

Extract from United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)

The welfare of the pupils in our care is paramount. St. Dominic's Child Protection Policy is designed to help protect all pupils in our care from harm.

When abuse is suspected or when a pupil makes an allegation that she is suffering or has suffered abuse, the school has a statutory obligation, under the Children (N.I.) Order 1995, to make a referral either to the social services of the local Health and Social Services Trust or to the Police.

If a parent or guardian of a pupil has any concerns or wishes to make a complaint against a member of staff he/she should contact the Principal, Mrs Carol McCann or the Chair of the Board of Governors, Mr Rory Galway.

Safeguarding Team

Chair of Board of Governors	*Mr Rory Galway*
Designated Governor	*Mrs Catherine Finnegan*
Principal	*Mrs Orla O'Neill*
Designated Teacher	*Ms Phyllis McNulty*
Deputy Designated Teachers	*Ms Aine Braniff and Mrs Joanna Fitzsimons*

Appendix 6

ROLE OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER AGENCIES

Social Services have a statutory duty to investigate any case where they receive information suggesting that a child or young person may be in need of care, protection or control unless satisfied that such enquiries are unnecessary. Their objective is to ensure the safety and welfare of the child. They have a lead role in co-ordinating the work of all the agencies and professionals concerned with the child's family. A joint protocol has been established between the Social Services and the Police for investigative purposes. This will involve the police in investigating situations where a crime may have been committed.

When there is suspicion that a child has been abused, Social Services may convene a multi-disciplinary Case Conference which may involve principals or their nominees depending upon who is best placed to contribute effectively to the discussion of the child's welfare.

The objectives of the Case Conference are to:

(i) share and exchange relevant information on a confidential basis;

(i) determine the nature and degree of abuse or risk of abuse and whether to place the child's name on the Child Protection Register;

(ii) devise a Child Protection plan which identifies the contribution that individual agencies and professionals will make;

(iii) identify a case co-ordinator (normally from the Social Services Department) and to arrange for the review of the plan on at least six monthly basis

Decisions of Case Conferences will be forwarded to principals and should be stored separately and securely. If the child transfers to another school, the Social Services Co-ordinator should be informed, and the receiving school should be advised that the child's name is on the Child Protection Register. All Child Protection records held by the school from which the child transfers should be destroyed, including case conference records, the receiving school should approach the Social Services directly for information.

Social Services will send information in writing to the school about any child whose name has been included on the Child Protection Register, including whether the child is in the care of Social Services and what information has been made known to the parents about allegations or suspicions of abuse. Social Services will ask the school authorities to pay particular attention to such children in respect of their attendance record, emotional and social development and any other cause for further concern. A social worker will liaise with the principal and/or other education staff about the child's progress. When a child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register schools will be informed in writing by Social Services. Records should be destroyed when the child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register.

(Extract from C.C.M.S. Document on Child Protection)

Appendix 7

Guidelines for Child Protection Referrals

- Following a report/disclosure of suspected child abuse the first contact with social services is usually made by phone.
- The phone call should be followed as soon as possible by a written referral using the first five pages of the UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) form.

  Further information should follow on a more completed UNOCINI.

- If a parent/guardian is not the suspected abuser, parents should be informed and parental consent should be sought. If consent of parent is not given the referral should be made and this should be noted.
  If a parent/guardian is suspected the referral must be made immediately.

- All documentation should be kept in a secure filing cabinet.
- If a child's name is removed from the child protection register all third party notes/cases conference minutes should be destroyed.
- The school should request any child protection information for new pupils from the previous school. It is also the responsibility of DTs in schools to pass this on to a new school unless requested.

A UNOCINI form should also be used to help identify and help children who are considered to be in need of support. It should be used as an assessment tool and to facilitate discussions when seeking advice from the EDUCATION AUTHORITY child protection officers. In any case where there is doubt the advice of the EDUCATION AUTHORITY officers should be obtained and noted.

Consent

By law, young people have a right to have their wishes and feelings taken into account where any referral of a safeguarding nature is being considered. Where a young person is deemed to be competent to give or refuse consent to a referral being made – the Safeguarding Team's role is to give due consderation to those wishes. However, there may be occasions where the Safeguarding Team cannot comply with a young person's wish for a referral not to be made (eg in the case of alleged sexual assault/abuse).

Where a young person child does wish to proceed with a referral, the parent/guardian should be informed and consent should be sought. In this case the matter should be passed on regardless of the parent's wishes.

Appendix 8

The following information is given to substitute teachers on their arrival in the school.

Information for Substitute teachers

Mission Statement

St. Dominic's is a community committed to mutual respect where every individual is valued, respected, encouraged and empowered to reach her / his potential in an atmosphere of love, forgiveness, honesty, openness and optimism.
We are committed to celebrating difference, to promoting equality, self-belief and a culture of confidence where success is celebrated.
We strive to unlock our individual and collective potential and to be prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century, reflecting our strong Dominican Ethos

Behaviour

St Dominic's operates a Positive Behaviour policy with electronic behaviour records attached to Lesson Monitor.

Should there be a behaviour issue with any pupil that cannot be resolved following normal classroom positive behaviour procedures, please refer to the main office who will contact a member of Senior Staff.

Work/study

During classes supervised by a substitute teacher, pupils should complete the work left by the class teacher. If a pupil finishes that work before the end of the period, she should do revision for that subject or read a library book.

Child Protection

Any issues relating to safeguarding or child protection please refer to the Designated Teacher (Ms Phyllis McNulty) or one of the Deputy Designated Teachers (Ms Aine Braniff and Mrs Joanna Fitzsimons) or to the Principal.
Any such concern must be reported before leaving the school.

Any other issues

Please refer to Mr Darren Scott

Related Policies

Positive Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy
Data Protection Policy
Safe Use of Internet Policies
RSE Policy
SEN Policy
Positive Behaviour Policy
Newcomer Policy