

St Dominic's Grammar School



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Procedure Details

Legal Status	Adopted	Version Date	Last Review	Next Review	Responsible
		March 2026	January 2025	March 2027	Designated Teacher

Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DTCP): Mr Darren Scott

Deputy Designated Teacher(s): Mrs Joanna Fitzsimons, Ms Aine Braniff, Mr P McMaster

Designated Governor for Child Protection: Mrs Sarah Duffy

Related Documents

1. Positive Relationships and Addressing Bullying Behaviour Policy'
2. Positive Behaviour Policy
3. Staff Code of Conduct
4. Pupil Acceptable Use of ICT
5. Staff Acceptable Use of ICT
6. Relationships and Sexuality Policy.
7. Attendance Policy
8. Safe Handling
9. Special Educational Needs Policy
10. First Aid and Administration of Medicines Policy
11. Health and Safety Policy
12. Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
13. E-Safety Policy
14. Educational Visits Policy

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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

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 Addressing Bullying Behaviour Policy', 'Positive Behaviour 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 activity that is taken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.

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: LEGAL CONTEXT

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.

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)

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).

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: 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.

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.

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 through working in partnership.

(iv) 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.

(v) 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.

(vi) 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.

(vii) 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

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, “Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland” (DHSSPSNI, 2017 and 2024), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools” Circular 2017/04 (and subsequent amendments) and the SBNI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

Adult Safeguarding

For further information see: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/adult-safeguarding-prevention-and-protection-partnership-key-document>

Adult safeguarding is based on fundamental human rights and on respecting the rights of adults as individuals, treating all adults with dignity and respecting their right to choose. It involves empowering and enabling all adults, including those at risk of harm, to manage their own health and well-being and to keep themselves safe. It extends to intervening to protect where harm has occurred or is likely to occur and promoting access to justice. All adults at risk should be central to any actions and decisions affecting their lives.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring that the welfare of vulnerable adults is paramount.
- Maximising the student’s choice, control and inclusion, and protecting their human rights.
- Working in partnership with others in order to safeguard vulnerable adults.

We will follow the procedures outlined in this policy when responding to concerns or disclosures of abuse relating to our students who are 18 years or over.

SECTION 4: DEFINITIONS OF HARM

Definition of Harm

(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and young People in Northern Ireland August 2017)

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example,

in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm.

Harm can be caused by:

- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation

SEXUAL ABUSE occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

PHYSICAL ABUSE is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

NEGLECT is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

EXPLOITATION is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, and engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Although 'exploitation' is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the

exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR categories as children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse.

Specific Types of Abuse

In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse that we in St Dominic's Grammar School are aware of and have therefore included them in our policy. Please see Appendix 8

Children with Increased Vulnerabilities

Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English or sexual orientation. We have included information about children with increased vulnerabilities in our policy. Please see Appendix 9

Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

The definition of signs and symptoms of abuse are taken from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI (October 2024). Please see Appendix 10

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland | Department of Health

Adult Safeguarding

An 'Adult at risk of harm' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics and/or
- b) Life circumstances

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An 'Adult in need of protection' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics and/or
- b) Life circumstances and
- c) Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; and
- d) Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

SECTION 5: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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 **Mrs Mary McIvor**

- 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.

The School Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team are:

The Chair of Governors- Mrs Mary McIvor

The Delegated Governor for Child Protection- Mrs Sarah Duffy

The Principal (Chair): Mrs Orla O'Neill

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection – Mr Darren Scott

The Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection -Ms Aine Braniff, Mr Philip McMaster and Mrs Joanna Fitzsimons

As best practice, in the best interests of the children, and as a support for the Designated Teachers, the school established a Safeguarding Team. This team includes the Chair of the BoG, the Designated Governor for Child Protection, the Principal (as Chair), the DT and the DDTs.

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

CPSS provides child protection training in relation to the specific responsibilities of each member of the team.

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 has 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.

Role of Designated Teachers for Child Protection

The Designated Teacher for Child Abuse is **Mr Darren Scott**

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

The Role of the Deputy Designated Teachers

The Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection are Ms Aine Braniff, Mrs Joanna Fitzsimons and Mr Philip McMaster

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.

Parents

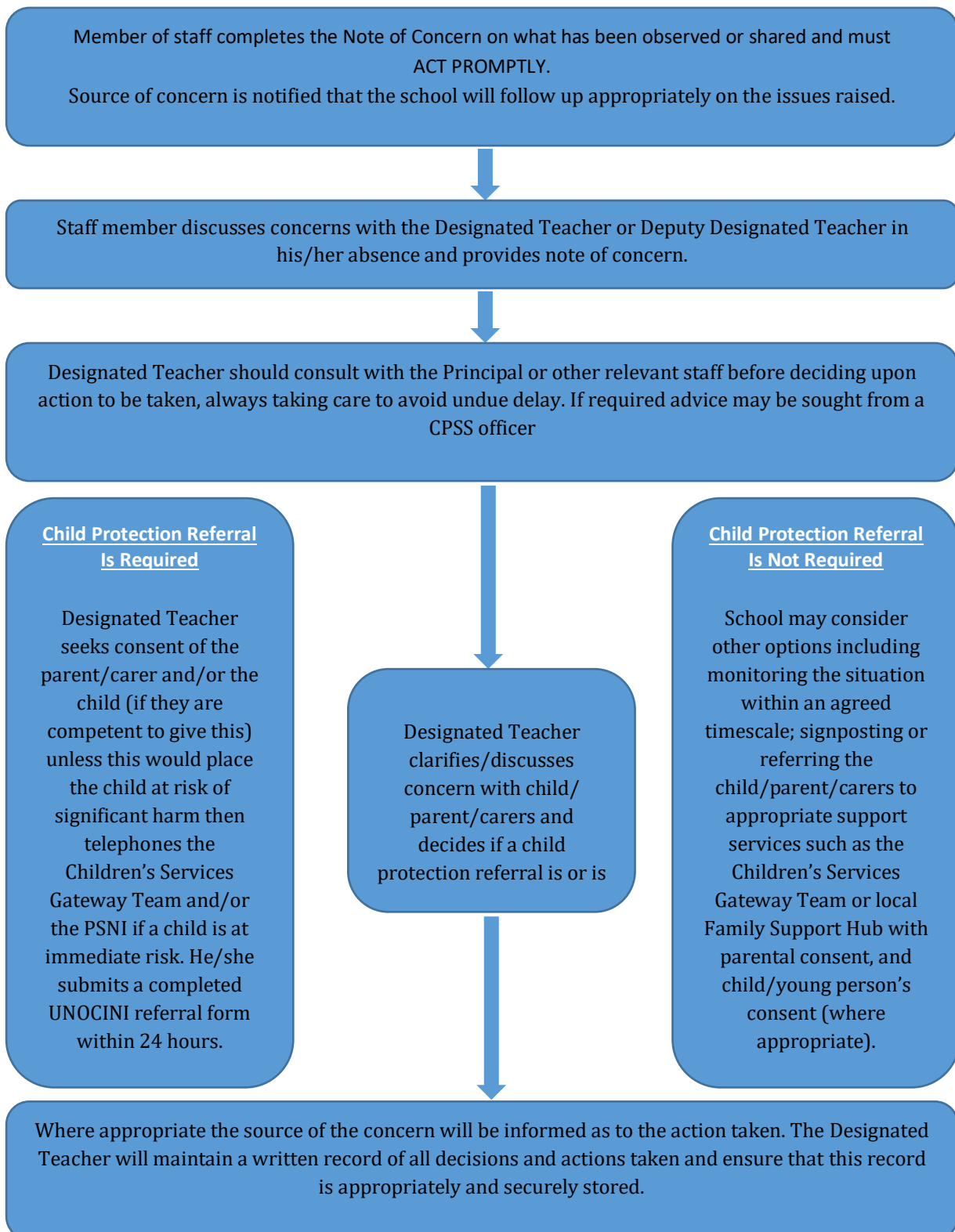
The primary responsibility for safeguarding and protection of children rests with parents who should feel confident about raising any concerns they have in relation to their child.

Parents can play their part in safeguarding by informing the school:

- If the child has a medical condition or educational need.
- If there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child.
- If there is any change in a child's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility.
- If there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school.
- If their child is absent and should send in a note on the child's return to school. This assures the school that the parent/carer knows about the absence. More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at:
www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection

SECTION 6: PROCEDURES

Procedure Where the School Has Concerns, or Has Been Given Information, about Possible Abuse by Someone Other Than a Member of Staff



Guidelines for Staff

- Any allegation by a child that she/he 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.

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

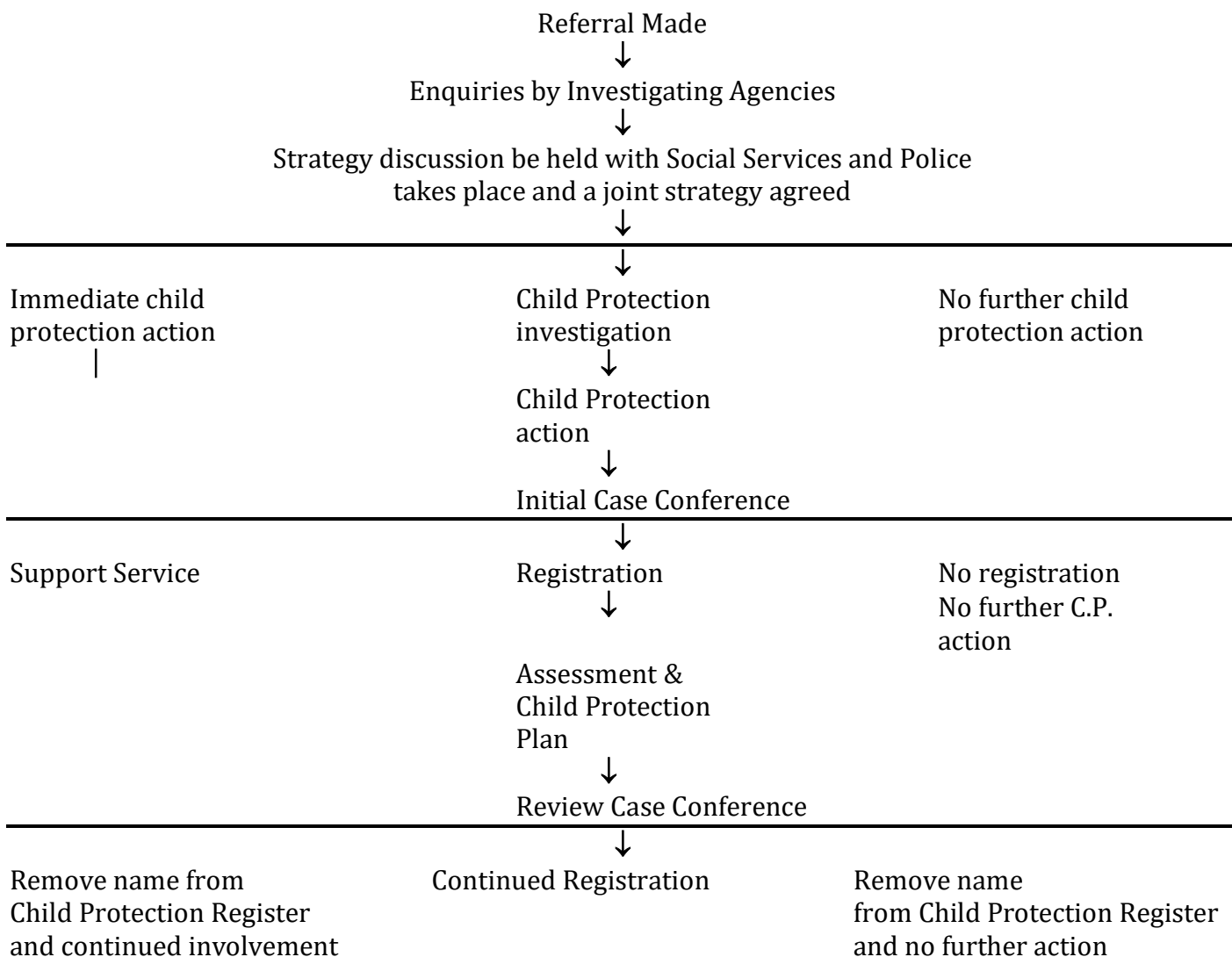
- Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the school's non-teaching staff sees such signs, she should immediately bring them to the attention of 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.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REFERRAL IS MADE?

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.

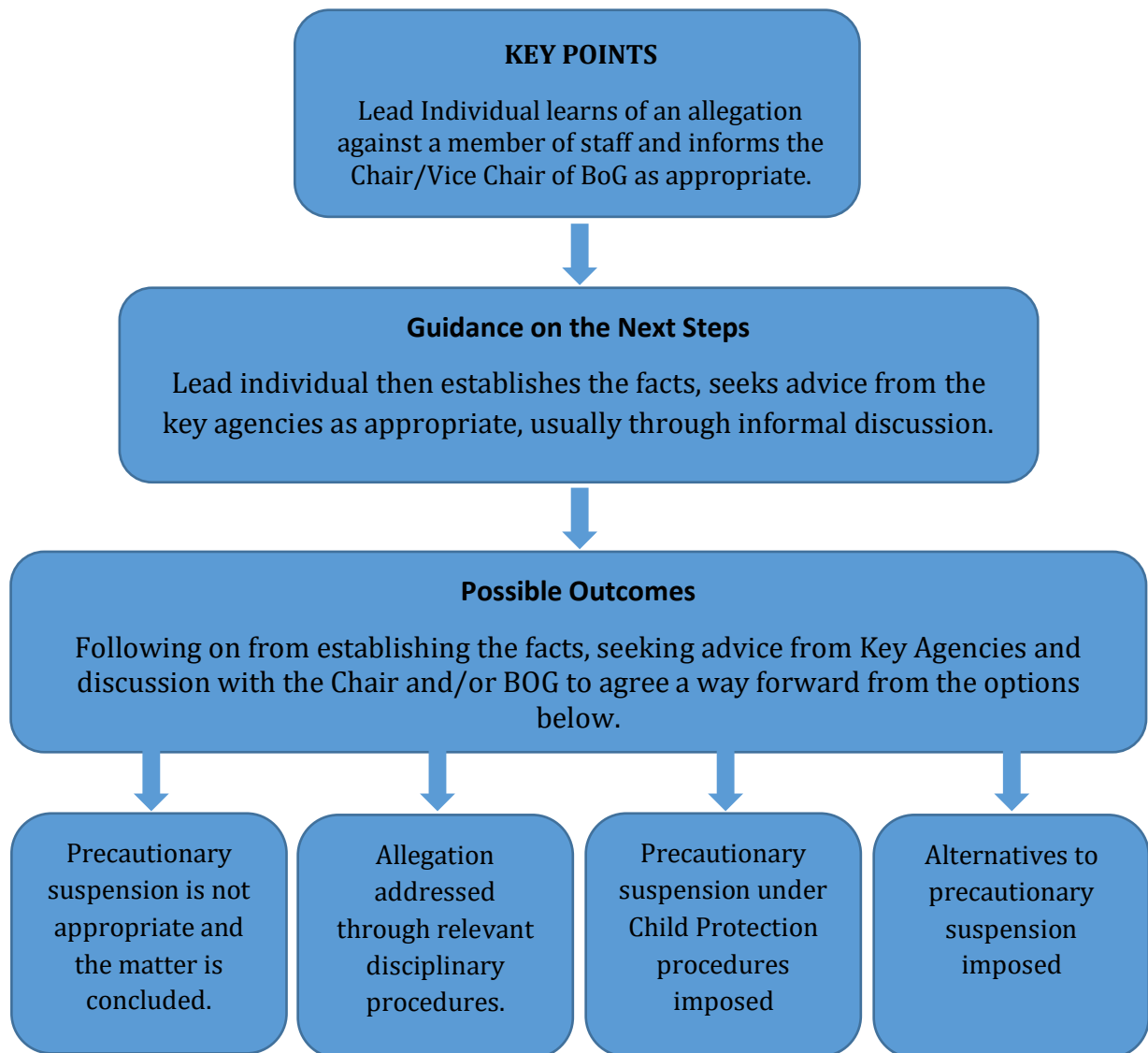


Staff may be called upon to attend the initial strategy discussion and any subsequent case conferences. In more serious cases, staff may be required to assist in the preparation of a Court Report and may be asked to appear in court.

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

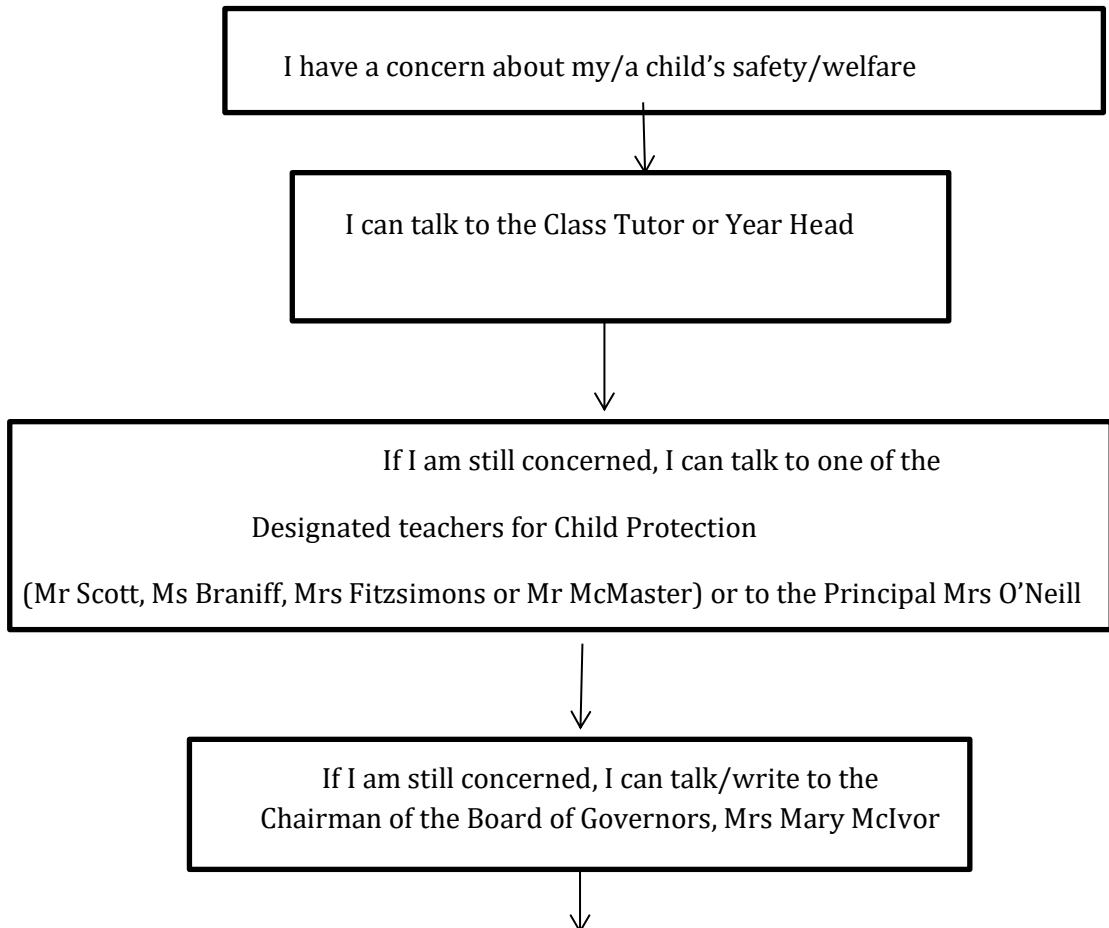
1. It is imperative that any disclosure by a child, or concern that indicates a child may be at immediate risk, is reported immediately to the PSNI and Social Services to ensure that emergency protection measures are put in place. This is particularly important if there is an identified risk to the child 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. <u>If Child Protection referral is not required</u> 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. <u>If Child Protection referral is required</u> 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



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.

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 5pm on any day when pupils are attending after-school activities.

Evening Study

Members of the Senior Leadership team supervise Evening Study on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5pm until 8pm. **NB** – evening study is runs from February through to June.

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 Action Mental Health agency, Women's Aid and HIPP Psychology. The Health and Wellbeing 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.

Three areas from our '7 areas of health and wellbeing' programme are 'Healthy Choices', 'Relationships' and 'Wellbeing'. The promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing of pupils is achieved by raising awareness of social, emotional, and health issues, developing the confidence, resiliencies and coping skills of pupils. "Keeping safe messages" are delivered throughout the programme and supported by workshops delivered by the PSNI and Tooled Up on internet safety, personal safety and road safety. 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.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

Setting an Example

All staff and volunteers in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. Staff and volunteers should therefore, for example, avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times, and demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same. Teachers should avoid using teaching materials of a sensitive nature which could be misinterpreted. All staff and volunteers should be familiar with all school policies and procedures and to comply with these so as to set a good example to pupils.

Staff and volunteers must always comply with statutory requirements in relation to such issues as discrimination, health and safety and data protection.

Relationships and Attitudes

All staff and volunteers should treat pupils with respect and dignity and not in a manner which demeans or undermines them, their parents or carers, or colleagues. Staff and volunteers should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and maturity of their pupils. They should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as sarcasm, making jokes at the expense of pupils, embarrassing or humiliating pupils, discriminating against or favouring pupils. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require thought to ensure that conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Relationships with pupils must be professional at all times and sexual relationships with current pupils are not permitted and may lead to criminal conviction.

Staff and volunteers may have less formal contact with pupils outside of school: perhaps through mutual membership of social groups, sporting organisations, or family connections. Staff and volunteers should not assume that the school would be aware of any such relationship and should therefore consider whether the school should be made aware of the connection.

Staff and volunteers should always behave in a professional manner, which within the context of this Code of Conduct includes such aspects as:

- acting in a fair, courteous and mature manner to pupils, colleagues and other stakeholders
- co-operating and liaising with colleagues, as appropriate, to ensure pupils receive a coherent and comprehensive educational service; f respect for school property
- taking responsibility for the behaviour and conduct of pupils in the classroom and sharing such responsibility elsewhere on the premises
- addressing pupils formally by their Christian name. Familiar terms e.g. darling, pet, which are not appropriate in a professional context, should be avoided.
- being familiar with communication channels and school procedures applicable to both pupils and staff and volunteers
- respect for the rights and opinions of others.

Private Meetings with Pupils

It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews with individual pupils must take place. As far as possible, staff and volunteers should conduct interviews in a room with visual access or with an open door and ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. Where possible, another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

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

Physical Contact with Pupils

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 recorded 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.

Staff and volunteers should therefore be cognisant of the guidance issued by the Department on the use of reasonable force (Circular 1999/09 and guidance document 'Towards a Model Policy in Schools on Use of Reasonable Force').

Honesty and Integrity

All staff and volunteers are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.

Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school (e.g. a supplier of materials) must be declared to the Principal. A record should be kept of all such gifts received. This requirement does not apply to "one off" token gifts from pupils or parents e.g. at Christmas or the end of the school year. Staff and volunteers should be mindful that gifts to individual pupils may be considered inappropriate and could be misinterpreted.

Conduct outside of Work

Staff and volunteers should not engage in conduct outside work which could damage the reputation and standing of the school or the staff/ volunteer's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.

Staff and volunteers may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary and should ensure it does not affect their work performance in the school. Advice should be sought from the Principal when considering work outside the school.

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.
- A staff member or volunteer's off duty hours are their personal concern but all staff and volunteers should exercise caution when using information technology and be fully aware of the risks to themselves and others. For school-based activities, advice is contained in the school's Online Safety Policy.
- Staff and volunteers should exercise particular caution in relation to making online associations/friendships with current pupils via social media and using texting/email facilities to communicate with them. It is preferable that any contact with pupils is made via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment when necessary

Confidentiality

Staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about pupils including highly sensitive or private information. It should not be shared with any person other than on a need-

to-know basis. In circumstances where the pupil's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

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;
- 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.

There are some circumstances in which a member of staff or volunteer may be expected to share information about a pupil, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals should pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.

If a member of staff or volunteer is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to senior leadership.

Staff and volunteers need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support pupils, they must not promise confidentiality or request pupils to do the same under any circumstances. Additionally concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to the Principal or a member of the safeguarding team without delay.

The school's child protection arrangements should include any external candidates studying or sitting examinations in the school.

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.

School Trips / Extended Visits

- 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.

Conduct outside of 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.

Processes to follow

- 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.

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

The Board of Governors of St. Dominic's Grammar 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 Addressing Bullying Behaviour 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 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. There are also Newcomer and Wellbeing Prefects who support younger students. 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 BEHAVIOUR 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 behaviour. 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 an Incident of Bullying Behaviour

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 of Bullying Behaviour

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 Student Alleged to have Displayed Bullying Behaviours

Students who have employed bullying behaviours against others, or who have been involved in 'bystander bullying' behaviour 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 –Information for staff and parents

E-safety - All pupils and parents are given advice and guidance on the safe use of the internet via presentations, workshops, School Comms emails and communications from Toolled Up.

We have developed the following rules to ensure the privacy and safety of pupils when using the Internet, Artificial Intelligence and social media. 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

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.

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.

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;

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

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

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.

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.

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

Violation of the above rules shall result in a temporary or permanent ban of use of the network.

Parents/guardians shall be informed.

Disciplinary action will be taken in line with existing school rules on inappropriate behaviour.

Where applicable, police or local authorities may be involved.

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.

Letter from EA, PSNI and SBNI on keeping safe whilst using Artificial Intelligence

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: AI generated and manipulated images involving young people

There is growing concern about the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital tools to create or manipulate images of children and young people in sexualised or harmful ways. You may have heard of terms like 'AI CSAM' 'deepfakes' or 'nudify' apps and websites in the news recently. These tools are now widely available and often free to access via devices such as tablets, laptops and smartphones. This involve altering existing photos or creating entirely new AI generated sexual abuse content. These images can look very real even when they are fake, and this can be extremely distressing for those involved.

Some young people may misuse AI to create nude or sexualised images of others, sometimes thinking it is a joke, trying to embarrass someone, or not realising the harm it can cause. Taking, possessing or sharing nude or sexualised images of anyone under 18, including images created using AI, is illegal and is classed as child sexual abuse material. Please remind your child not to create or share any images that could harm someone or break the law, to think carefully before posting online, and to speak to you if anything worries them.

If your child has been affected by harmful or manipulated images, or has been involved in creating or sharing them, please speak to your school, college or youth club safeguarding lead, or contact the police for advice. If an offence has been committed, the police will respond sensitively and consider all circumstances. The law is there to protect all young people from harm.

Steps you should take:

Talk to your young person

Avoid assuming they know the risks. Have an open conversation and remind your young person to pause and think carefully before posting, sharing or accepting images online. Discuss the use of AI, respecting others and what the law is.

Support and reassurance

Encourage your young person to speak to you or another adult they trust immediately if they see anything online that worries them.

Seek help if needed

If your young person has been affected by harmful or manipulated images or has been involved in creating, sharing or being in possession of an image, remain calm and seek support:

Contact your school, college or club safeguarding lead or the Police for advice.

Non-Emergencies: Call 101 or report online via <https://www.psnipolice.uk/report>

Emergencies: If a child is in immediate danger, always dial 999

Further support and advice is available:

Further advice is available on the Online Safety Hub, which includes a guide on AI and Emerging Technologies explaining the key safeguarding concerns to be aware of and how to respond.

Additional information is available from the NSPCC and Safer Schools NI.

A young person can also use the Report Remove service provided by Childline to help young people under 18 in the UK to confidentially report sexual images and videos of themselves and remove them from the internet.

Thank you for working with us to help keep children and young people safe.

Yours faithfully,

Eve Bremner, Chief Education Officer Education Authority

Ms Bernie McNally, Independent Chair Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

Detective Superintendent Jordan Piper, Police Service of Northern Ireland

Appendix 3

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:
If 'No' state reason:

Yes: ☐ No: ☐

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 4

Safeguarding Policy Statement for Parents

"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 Orla O'Neill or the Chair of the Board of Governors, Mrs Mary McIvor

Safeguarding Team

Chair of Board of Governors

Mrs Mary McIvor

Designated Governor

Mrs Sarah Duffy

Principal

Mrs Orla O'Neill

Designated Teacher

Mr Darren Scott

Deputy Designated Teachers

Ms Aine Braniff, Mrs Joanna Fitzsimons and Mr

Philip McMaster

Appendix 5

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:

- share and exchange relevant information on a confidential basis;
- determine the nature and degree of abuse or risk of abuse and whether to place the child's name on the Child Protection Register;
- devise a Child Protection plan which identifies the contribution that individual agencies and professionals will make;
- 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 6

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 consideration 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 7

Information for Substitute teachers

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

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 (Mr D Scott) 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 Philip McMaster

Appendix 8

Specific Types of Abuse

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 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. Those working or volunteering with children or young people should be alert to signs that may indicate grooming and take early action in line with their child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures to enable preventative action to be taken, if possible, before harm occurs. Practitioners should be aware that those involved in grooming may themselves be children or young people and may be acting under the coercion or influence of adults. Such young people must be considered victims of those holding power over them. Careful consideration should always be given to any punitive approach or 'criminalising' young people who may, themselves, still be victims and/or acting under duress, control, threat, the fear of, or actual violence. In consultation with the PSNI and where necessary the PPS, HSC professionals must consider whether children used to groom others should be considered a child in need or requiring protection from significant harm

If the staff in St Dominic's Grammar School become aware of signs that may indicate grooming, they will take early action and follow the school's child protection policies and procedures. The HSCT and PSNI should be involved as early as possible to ensure any evidence that may assist prosecution is not lost and to enable a disruption plan to reduce the victim's contact with the perpetrator(s) and reduce the perpetrator(s) control over the victim to be put in place without delay.

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

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, 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.**

Statutory Responsibilities

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the school's child protection policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

Domestic and Sexual Abuse

The NI Domestic and Sexual Abuse strategy 2024 - 2031 defines domestic and sexual violence and abuse as follows: -

Domestic Abuse 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 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).

If it comes to the attention of school staff that domestic and /or sexual violence and abuse, is or may be, affecting a child this will be passed on to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team.

Operation Encompass

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

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

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

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

for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

Further information about Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 can be found by following the link to: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk>

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 established procedures set out in our school policy. Where there is a concern that a child or young person may be at immediate risk of FGM this should be reported to the PSNI without delay. Contact can be made directly to the Sexual Referral Unit (based within the Public Protection Unit) at 028 9025 9299. Where there is a concern that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, referral should be made to the relevant HSCT Gateway Team.

Forced Marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in St Dominic's Grammar School we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

Children Who Display Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child's development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. As a school we support children and young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships. Teachers are often therefore in a good position to consider if behaviour is within the normal continuum or otherwise.

It must also be borne in mind that sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the school's positive behaviour policy, but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent. Healthy sexual behaviour will generally have no need for intervention; however, consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting.

Problematic sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. If the behaviour is considered to be more serious advice from the EA CPSS should be sought

Harmful sexual behaviour is an umbrella term for sexual behaviours which are of concern and have or are likely to cause harm to the individual themselves or to others. It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent.

Normal sexual behaviour will generally have no need for intervention; however, consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting.

Inappropriate sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. For example, a one-off incident may simply require liaising with parents on

setting clear direction that the behaviour is unacceptable, explaining boundaries and providing information and education. However, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) may be required. The CPSS will advise if contact with PSNI or Social Services is required.

Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviours are of significant concern and guidance on the management of the pupils within the school and referral to other agencies such as the PSNI or Social Services will be sought from CPSS.

We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2022/02 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

Online safety

Online safety means acting and staying safe when engaging in the online world. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, making comments on social media posts, social environments and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

The overall strategic direction for child safety online is the **Keeping Children and Young People Safe: An Online Safety Strategy**, published in February 2021. It sets out the Northern Ireland Executive's ambition that all children and young people enjoy the educational, social and economic benefits of the online world, and that they are empowered to do this safely, knowledgeably and without fear.

The Strategy recognises that the ever-changing and fast-growing online environment presents both extensive educational benefits as well challenges in terms of keeping children and young people safe from the dangers of inappropriate communication and content.

For further information see: [Online Safety Hub - Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland \(safeguardingni.org\)](https://safeguardingni.org)

We in St Dominic's Grammar School have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of pupils accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The school's actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. 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.

Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes is a term used to describe the sending or posting of naked or partially naked images, videos or livestreams online by young people under the age of 18. This could be via text, email, social media and gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. Sharing nudes is sometimes called 'sexting', however this term is often used by young people to talk about sharing sexual messages and not imagery.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes between individuals in a relationship

As adults we can question the wisdom of this, but the reality is that children consider this to be normal and often the result of a child's natural curiosity about sex and their exploration of relationships. As a consequence, engaging in the taking or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes may not always be in a 'harmful' context. Nonetheless, staff must be aware that an image can be shared non-consensually, or a child can be groomed, tricked or coerced into sending nude and semi-nude images. Clearly 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 Specific Types of Abuse Specific Types of Abuse 50 51 relationship) and in these cases you should contact local PSNI on 101 for advice and guidance. Please be aware that, while offences may technically have been committed by the child/children involved, the matter will be dealt with sensitively and considering all the circumstances and it is not necessarily the case that they will end up with a criminal record. It is important that particular care is taken in dealing with any such cases. Adopting scare tactics may discourage a child from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of sexual images. Advice should be sought from CPSS

Sharing an Inappropriate Image with an Intent to Cause Distress

If a child 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 schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015) to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent - see Articles 33-35 of the Act for more detail. By contacting the PSNI you could help prevent further distribution of the image and further such incidents contain the damage it can cause. If a child has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures should be followed. For further information see:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted

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

Adult Safeguarding

For further information see: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/adult-safeguarding-prevention-and-protection-partnership-key-document>

The decision as to whether the definition of an 'adult in need of protection' is met will demand the careful exercise of professional judgement applied on a case by case basis. This will take into account all the available evidence, concerns, the impact of harm, degree of risk and other matters relating to the individual and his or her circumstances. The seriousness and the degree of risk of harm are key to determining the most appropriate response and establishing whether the threshold for protective intervention has been met.

The main forms of abuse are:

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in actual physical injury. This may include hitting, pushing, rough handling, exposure to heat or cold, force feeding, improper administration of medication, denial of treatment, misuse or illegal use of restraint and deprivation of liberty.

Sexual Violence and Abuse

Sexual abuse is any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted or takes place without consent or understanding⁶. Sexual violence and abuse can take many forms and may include non-contact sexual activities, such as indecent exposure, stalking, grooming, being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material, or being made to watch sexual activities. It may involve physical contact, including but not limited to non-consensual penetrative sexual activities or non-penetrative sexual activities, such as intentional touching (known as groping). Sexual violence can be found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background or sexual orientation.

Psychological/Emotional Abuse

Psychological/emotional abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or inflicts mental distress by threat, humiliation or other verbal/non-verbal conduct. This may include threats, humiliation or ridicule, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, Controlling, Intimidation and Coercion.

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion or deception. This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property or inheritance.

Institutional Abuse

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use. This can occur in any organisation, within and outside the HSC sector. Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm. Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.

Neglect occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, appropriate and adequate care and support which is required by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a failure to take reasonable action given the information and facts available to them at the time. It may include physical neglect to the extent that health or well-being is impaired, administering too much or too little medication, failure to provide access to appropriate health or social care, withholding the necessities of life, such as adequate nutrition, heating or clothing, or failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person concerned or to others particularly when the person lacks the capacity to assess risk.

Appendix 9

Children with Increased Vulnerabilities

- **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 those 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. Staff and volunteers working with children with disabilities will receive training to enable them to identify and refer concerns early in order to allow preventative action to be taken.

- **Children With Limited Fluency in English**

Children whose first language is not English/Newcomer pupils should be given the opportunity to express themselves to a member of staff or other professional with appropriate language/communication skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred. DTs and other relevant school staff should seek advice and support from the EA's Intercultural Education Service if necessary. All schools should create an atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or pupils for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them.

- **Gender Identity Issues and Sexual Orientation**

Schools should strive 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. DE requires all grant-aided schools to develop their own policy on how they will address Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the curriculum. It is via this policy that schools are expected to cover issues relating to relationships and sexuality, including those affecting LGB&T children and young people.

As a staff working with young people from the LGBTQ+ community we will support them to appropriately access information and support on healthy relationships and to report any concerns or risks of abuse or exploitation.

- **Work Experience, School Trips and Educational Visits**

Our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people also includes periods when they are in our care outside of the school setting. We will follow DE and EA guidance on educational visits, school trips and work experience to ensure our current safeguarding policies are adhered to and that appropriate staffing levels are in place.

Appendix 10

Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

This section contains information for all professionals working with children and families and is not an exhaustive list. The following pages provide guidance only and should not be used as a checklist.

The first indication that a child is being abused may not necessarily be the presence of a severe injury. Concerns may become apparent in a number of ways e.g.

- by bruises or marks on a child's body
- by remarks made by a child, his parents or friends
- by overhearing conversation by the child, or his parents
- by observing that the child is either being made a scapegoat by or has a poor relationship/bond with his parents.
- by a child having sexual knowledge or exhibiting sexualised behaviour which is unusual given his age and/or level of understanding.
- by a child not thriving or developing at a rate which one would expect for his age and stage of development.
- by the observation of a child's behaviour and changes in his behaviour.
- by indications that the family is under stress and needs support in caring for their children.
- by repeat visits to a general practitioner or hospital.

There may be a series of events which in themselves do not necessarily cause concern but are significant, if viewed together. Initially the incident may not seem serious but it should be remembered that prompt help to a family under stress may prevent minor abuse escalating into something more serious.

It is important to remember that abused children do not necessarily show fear or anxiety and may appear to have established a sound relationship with their abuser(s). Staff should familiarise themselves on 'attachment theory' and its implications for assessing the bond between parents and their children.

Suspicious should be raised by e.g.

- discrepancy between an injury and the explanation
- conflicting explanation, or no explanation, for an injury
- delay in seeking treatment for any health problem
- injuries of different ages
- history of previous concerns or injuries
- faltering growth (failure to thrive)
- parents show little, or no, concern about the child's condition or show little warmth or empathy with the child
- evidence of domestic violence
- parents with mental health difficulties, particularly of a psychotic nature
- evidence of parental substance abuse

Signs and symptoms are indicators and simply highlight the need for further investigation and assessment.

Parental Response to Allegations of Child Abuse Which Raise Concern

Parents' responses to allegations of abuse of their child are very varied. The following types of response are of concern:

- there may be an unequivocal denial of abuse and possible non-compliance with enquiries.
- parents may over-react, either aggressively or defensively, to a suggestion that they may be responsible for harm to their child.
- there may be reluctance to give information, or the explanation given may be incompatible with the harm caused to the child, or explanations may change over time.
- parents may display a lack of awareness that the child has suffered harm, or that their actions, or the actions of others, may have caused harm.
- parents may seek to minimise the severity of the abuse or not accept that their actions constitute abuse.
- parents may fail to engage with professionals.
- blame or responsibility for the harm may be inappropriately placed on the child or an unnamed third party.
- parents may seek help on matters unrelated to the abuse or its causes (this may be to deflect attention away from the child and his injuries).
- the parents and/or child may go missing.

Physical Abuse

Children receive bumps and bruises as a result of the rough and tumble of normal play. Most children will have bruises or other injuries, therefore, from time to time. These will be accidental and can be easily explained.

It is not necessary to establish intent to cause harm to the child to conclude that the child has been subject to abuse. Physical abuse can occur through acts of both commission and/or omission.

Insignificant but repeated injuries, however minor, may be symptomatic of a family in crisis and, if no action is taken, the child may be further injured. All injuries should be noted and collated in the child's records and analysed to assess if the child requires to be safeguarded.

If on initial examination the injury is not felt to be compatible with the explanation given or suggest abuse it should be discussed with a senior paediatrician.

A small number of children suffer from rare conditions, e.g. haemophilia or brittle bone disease, which makes them susceptible to bruising and fractures. It is important to remain aware, however, that in such children some injuries may have a non-accidental cause. A "clotting screen" only excludes the common conditions which may cause spontaneous bleeding. If the history suggests a bleeding disorder, referral to a haematologist will be required.

Recognition of Physical Abuse

a) Bruises + Soft Tissue Injuries

Common sites for accidental bruising depend on the developmental stage of the child. They include:

- forehead
- crown of head
- bony spinal protuberances
- elbows and below

- hips
- hands
- shins

Less common sites for accidental bruising include:

- Eyes
- Ears
- Cheeks
- Mouth
- Neck
- Shoulders
- Chest
- Upper and Inner Arms
- Stomach
- Genitals
- Upper and Inner Thighs
- Lower Back and Buttocks
- Upper Lip and Frenulum
- Back of the Hands.

Non-accidental bruises may be:

- frequent
- patterned, e.g. finger and thumb marks
- in unusual positions, (note developmental level and activity of the child).

Research on aging of bruises (from photographs) has shown that it is impossible to accurately age bruises although it can be concluded that a bruise with a yellow colour is more than 18 hours old. Tender or swollen bruises are more likely to be fresh. It is not possible to conclude definitely that bruises of different colours were sustained at different times.

The following should give rise to concern e.g.

- bruising in a non-mobile child, in the absence of an adequate explanation,
- bruises other than at the common sites of accidental injury for a child of that developmental stage,
- facial bruising, particularly around the eyes, cheeks, mouth or ears, especially in very young children.
- soft tissue bruising, on e.g. cheeks, arms and inner surface of thighs, with no adequate explanation.
- a torn upper lip frenulum (skin which joins the lip and gum).
- patterned bruising e.g. linear or outline bruising, hand marks (due to grab, slap or pinch may be petechial), strap marks particularly on the buttocks or back.
- ligature marks caused by tying up or strangulation.

Most falls or accidents produce one bruise on a single surface, usually a bony protuberance. A child who falls downstairs would generally only have one or two bruises. Children usually fall forwards and therefore bruising is most usually found on the front of the body. In addition, there may be marks on their hands if they have tried to break their fall.

Bruising may be difficult to see on a dark-skinned child. Mongolian blue spots are natural pigmentation to the skin, which may be mistaken for bruising. These purplish-blue skin markings are most commonly found on the backs of children whose parents are darker skinned.

b) Eye Injuries

Injuries which should give cause for concern:

- black eyes can occur from any direct injury, both accidental and non-accidental. Determining how the injury occurred is vital, therefore; bilateral "black eyes" can occur accidentally as a result of blood tracking from a very hard blow to the central forehead (Injury should be evident on mid-forehead, bridge of nose). It is rare for both eyes to be bruised separately, accidentally however and at the same time.
- sub conjunctival haemorrhage
- retinal haemorrhage.

c) Burns and Scalds

Accidental scalds often:

- are on the upper part of the body
- are on a convex (curved) surface
- are irregular
- are superficial
- leave a recognisable pattern.

It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns. Any burn or scald with a clear outline should be regarded with suspicion e.g.

- circular burns
- linear burns
- burns of uniform depth over a large area
- friction burns
- scalds that have a line which could indicate immersion or poured liquid
- splash marks
- old scars indicating previous burns or scalds.

When a child presents with a burn or scald it is important to remember:

- a responsible adult checks the temperature of the bath before a child gets into it.
- a child is unlikely to sit down voluntarily in too hot water and cannot accidentally scald his bottom without also scalding his feet.
- "doughnut" shaped burns to the buttocks often indicate that a child has been held down in hot water, with the buttocks held against the water container e.g. bath, sink etc.
- a child getting into too hot water of its own accord will struggle to get out and there are likely to be splash marks.
- small round burns may be cigarette burns but can often be confused with skin conditions. Where there is doubt, a medical/dermatology opinion should be sought.

d) Fractures

The potential for a fracture should be considered if there is pain, swelling and discoloration over a bone or joint or a child is not using a limb, especially in younger children. The majority of fractures normally cause pain, and it is very difficult for a parent to be unaware that a child has been hurt. In infants, rib and metaphysical limb fractures may produce no detectable ongoing pain. However, It is very rare for a child aged under one year to sustain a fracture accidentally, but there may be some underlying medical condition, e.g. brittle bone disease, which can cause fractures in babies.

The most common non-accidental fractures are to the long bones in the arms and legs and to the ribs. The following should give cause for concern and further investigation may be necessary:

- any fracture in a child under one year of age
- any skull fracture in children under three years of age
- a history of previous skeletal injuries which may suggest abuse
- skeletal injuries at different stages of healing
- evidence of previous fractures which were left untreated.

e) Scars

Children may have scars from previous injuries. Particular note should be taken if there is a large number of scars of different ages, or of unusual shapes or large scars from burns or lacerations that have not received medical treatment.

f) Bites

Bites are always non-accidental in origin; they can be caused by animals or human beings (adult/child); a dental surgeon with forensic experience may be needed to secure detailed evidence in such cases.

g) Other Types of Physical Injuries

- poisoning, either through acts of omission or commission
- ingestion of other damaging substances, e.g. bleach
- administration of drugs to children where they are not medically indicated or prescribed
- female genital mutilation, which is an offence, regardless of cultural reasons
- unexplained neurological signs and symptoms, e.g. subdural haematoma

h) Fabricated or Induced Illness

Fabricated or induced illness, previously known as Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, is a condition where a child suffers harm through the deliberate action of the main carer, in most cases the mother, but which is attributed to another medical cause.

It is important not to confuse this deliberate activity with the behaviour and actions of over-anxious parents who constantly seek advice from doctors, health visitors and other health professionals about their child's wellbeing.

There is a need to exercise caution about attributing a child's illness, in the absence of a medical diagnosis, to deliberate activity on the part of a parent or carer to a fabricated or induced illness, as stated in the Court of Appeal judgement in the case of Angela Cannings.

(R v Cannings (2004) EWCA Criml (19 January 2004)).

The following behaviours exhibited by parents can be associated with fabricated or induced illness:

- deliberately inducing symptoms in children by administering medication or other substances, or by means of intentional suffocation.

- interfering with treatments by over-dosing, not administering them or interfering with medical equipment such as infusion lines or not complying with professional advice, resulting in significant harm.
- claiming the child has symptoms which may be unverifiable unless observed directly, such as pain, frequency of passing urine, vomiting or fits.
- exaggerating symptoms, causing professionals to undertake investigations and treatments which may be invasive, unnecessary and, therefore, are harmful and possibly dangerous.
- obtaining specialist treatments or equipment for children who do not require them.
- alleging psychological illness in a child.

There are a number of presentations in which fabricated or induced illness may be a possibility. These are:

- failure to thrive/growth faltering (sometimes through deliberate withholding of food.)
- fabrication of medical symptoms especially where there is no independent witness
- convulsions.
- pyrexia (high temperature).
- cyanotic episode (reported blue tinge to the skin due to lack of oxygen).
- apnoea (stops breathing).
- allergies
- asthmatic attacks
- unexplained bleeding (especially anal or genital or bleeding from the ears)
- frequent unsubstantiated allegations of sexual abuse, especially when accompanied by demands for medical examinations
- frequent 'accidental' overdoses (especially in very young children).

Concerns may arise when:

- reported symptoms and signs found on examinations are not explained by any medical condition from which the child may be suffering.
- physical examination and results of medical investigations do not explain reported symptoms and signs.
- there is an inexplicably poor response to prescribed medication and other treatment.
- new symptoms are reported on resolution of previous ones.
- reported symptoms and/or clinical signs do not occur when the carers are absent
- over time the child is repeatedly presented to health professionals with a range of signs and symptoms.
- the child's normal, daily life activities are being curtailed beyond that which might be expected for any medical disorder or disability from which the child is known to suffer.

It is important to note that the child may also have an illness that has been diagnosed and needs regular treatment. This may make the diagnosis of fabricated or induced illness difficult, as the presenting symptoms may be similar to those of the diagnosed illness.

Sexual Abuse

Most child victims are sexually abused by someone they know, either a family member or someone well known to them or their family. In recent years there has been an increasing recognition that both male and female children and older children are sexually abused to a greater extent than had previously been realised.

There are no 'typical' sexually abusing families. Children who have been sexually abused are likely to have been put under considerable pressure not to reveal what has been happening to them. Sexual abuse is damaging to children, both in the short and long term.

Both boys and girls of all ages are abused, and the abuse may continue for many years before it is disclosed. Abusers may be both male and female.

It is important to note that children and young people may also abuse other children sexually.

Children disclosing sexual abuse have the right to be listened to and to have their allegations taken seriously. Research shows it is rare for children to invent allegations of sexual abuse and that in fact they are more likely to claim they are not being abused when they are.

It is important that the indicators listed below are assessed in terms of significance and in the context of the child's life, before concluding that the child is, or has been, sexually abused.

Some indicators take on a greater, or lesser, importance depending upon the child's age.

Recognition of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse often presents in an obscure way. Whilst some child victims have obvious genital injuries, a sexually transmitted infection or are pregnant, relatively few children are so easily diagnosed. The majority of children subjected to sexual abuse, even when penetration has occurred, have on medical examination no evidence of the abuse having occurred.

The following indicators of sexual abuse may be observed in a child. There may be occasions when no symptoms are present, but it is still thought that a child may be, or has been, sexually abused. Suspicions increase where several features are present together.

The following list is not exhaustive and should not be used as a check list.

The Adolescent

In addition to the physical indicators previously outlined in the preschool and pre-adolescent child, the following indicators relate specifically to the adolescent:

- recurrent urinary tract infections.
- pregnancy, especially where the information about or the identity of the father is vague or secret or where there is complete denial of the pregnancy by the girl and her family.
- sexually transmitted infections.

Possible behavioural indicators include:

- repeated running away from home
- sleep problems - insomnia, recurrent nightmares, fear of going to bed or overdressing for bed
- dependence on alcohol or drug
- suicide attempts and self-mutilation
- hysterical behaviour, depression, withdrawal, mood swings
- vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation, fear of intimate relationships, promiscuity
- eating disorders — e.g. anorexia nervosa and bulimia
- low self-esteem and low expectation of others
- persistent stealing and /or lying
- sudden school problems - taunting, lack of concentration, falling standard or work etc.
- fear or abhorrence of one particular individual.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is as damaging as other, visible, forms of abuse in terms of its impact on the child. There is increasing evidence of the adverse long-term consequences for children's development where they have been subject to emotional abuse. Emotional abuse has an impact on a child's physical health, mental health, behaviour and self-esteem. It can be particularly damaging for children aged 0 to 3 years.

Emotional abuse may take the form of under-protection, and/or over-protection, of the child, which has a significant negative impact on a child's development.

The parents' physical care of the child, and his environment, may appear to meet the child's needs, but it is important to remain aware of the interactions and relationship which occur between the child and his parents to determine if they are nurturing and appropriate.

An emotionally abused child may be subject to constant criticism and being made a scapegoat, the continuous withholding of approval and affection, severe discipline or a total lack of appropriate boundaries and control. A child may be used to fulfil a parent's emotional needs.

The potential of emotional abuse should always be considered in referrals where instances of domestic violence have been reported.

Recognition of Emotional Abuse

Whilst emotional abuse can occur in the absence of other types of abuse, it is important to recognise that it does often co-exist with them, to a greater or lesser extent.

Child Behaviours associated with Emotional Abuse

Some of the symptoms and signs seen in children who are emotionally abused are presented below. It is the degree and persistence of such symptoms that should result in the consideration of emotional abuse as a possibility. Importantly, it should be remembered that whilst these symptoms may suggest emotional abuse they are not necessarily pathognomic of this since they often can be seen in other conditions.

Possible behaviours that may indicate emotional abuse include:

- serious emotional reactions, characterised by withdrawal, anxiety, social and home fears etc.
- marked behavioural and conduct difficulties, e.g. opposition and aggression, stealing, running away, promiscuity, lying.
- persistent relationship difficulties, e.g. extreme clinginess, intense separation reaction.
- physical problems such as repeated illnesses, severe eating problems, severe toileting problem.
- extremes of self-stimulatory behaviours, e.g. head banging, comfort seeking, masturbation etc.
- very low self-esteem, often unable to accept praise or to trust and lack of self-pride.
- lack of any sense of pleasure in achievement, over-serious or apathetic.
- over anxiety, e.g. constantly checking or over anxious to please.
- developmental delay in young children, and failure to reach potential in learning.

Parental Behaviour Associated with Emotional Abuse

Behaviour shown by parents which, if persistent, may indicate emotionally abusive behaviour includes:

- extreme emotions and behaviours towards their child including criticism, negativity, rejecting attitudes, hostility etc.
- fostering extreme dependency in the child
- harsh disciplining, inconsistent disciplining and the use of emotional sanctions such as withdrawal of love
- expectations and demands which are not appropriate for the developmental stage of the child, e.g. too high or too low
- exposure of the child to family violence and abuse
- inconsistent and unpredictable responses to the child
- contradictory, confusing or misleading messages in communicating with the child
- serious physical or psychiatric illness of a parent where the emotional needs of the child are not capable of being considered and/or appropriately met
- induction of the child into bizarre parental belief systems
- break-down in parental relationship with chronic, bitter conflict over contact or residence arrangements for the child
- major and repeated familial change, e.g. separations and reconstitution of families and/or changes of address
- making a child a scapegoat within the family

Neglect

Neglect and failure to thrive/growth faltering for non-organic reasons requires medical diagnosis. Non-organic failure to thrive is where there is a poor growth for which no medical cause is found, especially when there is a dramatic improvement in growth on a nutritional diet away from the parent's care. Failure to thrive tends to be associated with young children but neglect can also cause difficulties for older children.

There is a tendency to associate neglect with poverty and social disadvantage. Persistent neglect over long periods of time is likely to have causes other than poverty, however. There has to be a distinction made between financial poverty and emotional poverty.

There are a number of types of neglect that can occur separately or together, for example:

- medical neglect
- educational neglect
- simulative neglect environmental neglect
- environmental neglect
- failure to provide adequate supervision and a safe environment.

Recognition of Neglect

Neglect is a chronic, persistent problem. The concerns about the parents not providing "good enough" care for their child will develop over time. It is the accumulation of such concerns which will trigger the need to invoke the Child Protection Process. In cases of neglect, it is important that details about the standard of care of the child are recorded and there is regular inter-agency sharing of this information.

It is important to remember that the degree of neglect can fluctuate, sometimes rapidly, therefore ongoing inter-agency assessment and monitoring is essential.

The assessment of neglect should take account of the child's age and stage of development, whether the neglect is severe in nature and whether it is resulting in, or likely to result in, significant impairment to the child's health and development.

The following areas should be considered when assessing whether the quality of care a child receives constitutes neglect.

Child Health presentation indicators include:

- non-organic failure to thrive (growth faltering)
- poor weight gain (improvement when away from the care of the parents)
- poor height gain
- unmet medical needs
- untreated head lice/other infestations
- frequent attendance at 'accident and emergency' and/or frequent hospital admissions
- tired or depressed child, including a child who is anaemic or has rickets
- poor hygiene
- poor or inappropriate clothing for the time of year
- abnormal eating behaviour (bingeing or hoarding).

Emotional and behavioural development indicators include:

- developmental delay/special needs
- presents as being under-stimulated
- abnormal reaction to separation/ or attachment, disorder
- over-active and/or aggressive
- soiling and/or wetting
- repeated running away from home
- substance misuse
- offending behaviour, including stealing food
- teenage pregnancy.

Family and social relationship indicators include:

- high criticism/low warmth
- excluded by family
- sibling violence

- isolated child
- attachment disorders and /or seeking comfort from strangers
- left unattended/or to care for other children
- left to wander alone day or night
- constantly late to school/late being collected
- not wanting to go home from school or refusing to go to school
- poor attendance at school/nursery
- frequent name changes and/or change of address or parental figures within the home.
- management of a child with a disability who is not attaining the level of functioning which is commensurate with the disability.

Consideration should be given as to whether a child and adolescent mental health assessment is required. Have all children in the family been seen and their views explored and documented?

Parents

Lack of emotional warmth indicators include:

- unrealistic expectations of child
- inability to consider or put child's needs first
- name calling/degrading remarks
- lack of appropriate affection for the child
- violence within the home from which the child is not shielded
- partner resenting non-biological child and hostile in attitude towards him
- failure to provide basic care for the child.

Lack of stability indicators include:

- frequent changes of partners
- poor family support/inappropriate support
- lack of consistent relationships
- frequent moves of home
- enforced unemployment
- drug, alcohol or substance dependency
- financial pressures/debt
- absence of local support networks, neighbours etc.

Issues relating to providing guidance and setting boundaries indicators include:

- poor boundary setting
- inconsistent attitudes and reactions, especially to child's behaviour
- continuously failing appointments
- refusing offers of help and services
- failure to seek or use advice and/or help offered appropriately
- seeks to mislead professionals by providing inaccurate or confusing information
- failure to provide safe environment.

Social Presentation

- aggressive/threatening behaviour towards professionals and volunteers
- disguised compliance
- IOW self-esteem
- lack of self-care.

Health

- mental ill health
- substance misuse
- learning difficulties
- (post-natal) depression
- history of parental child abuse or poor parenting
- physical health.

Home and Environmental Conditions

The following home and environmental conditions should be considered:

- poor housing conditions
- overcrowding
- lack of water, heating, sanitation
- no access to washing machine
- piles of dirty washing
- little or no adequate clean bedding/furniture
- little or no food in cupboards
- human and/or animal excrement
- uncared for animals
- referrals to environmental health
- unsafe environment
- rural isolation.

Impediments to ongoing assessment and appropriate multidisciplinary support

- failure to see the child
- no ease of access to whole house
- fear of violence and aggression
- failure to seek support and advice or consultation, as appropriate, from line manager
- failure to record concern and initial impact
- inability to retain objectivity
- unwitting collusion with family
- failure to see beyond conditions in the home
- child's view is lost
- geographical stereotyping
- minimising concern
- poor networking amongst professionals
- inability to see what is/is not acceptable
- familiarity breeding contempt; and
- failure to make connections with information available from other services.

(Hammersmith & Fulham Inter-Agency Procedures 2002)

When staff become aware of any of the above features they should review the case with their line manager.

Children with Disability

In recognising child abuse, all professionals should be aware that children with a disability can be particularly vulnerable to abuse. They may need a high degree of physical care; they may have less access to protection and there may be a reluctance on the part of professionals to consider the possibility of abuse.

Recognition of Abuse of Children with Disability

Recognition of abuse can be difficult in that:

- symptoms and signs may be confused
- the child may not recognise the behaviour as abusive
- the child may have communication difficulties and be unable to disclose abuse
- there may be a dependency on several adults for intimate care
- there is a reluctance to accept that children with disabilities may be abused.

Children with disability will usually display the same symptoms and signs of abuse as other children. These may be incorrectly attributed, however, to the child's disability.

Risk Factors Associated with Child Abuse

A number of factors may increase the likelihood of abuse to a child. The following list is not exhaustive and does not preclude the possibility of abuse in families where none of these factors are evident.

Child

- poor bonding due to neo-natal problems
- attachment interfered with by multiple caring arrangements
- a 'difficult' child, a 'demanding' baby
- a child under five years is considered to be most vulnerable
- a child's name or sibling's names previously on the Child Protection Register
- a baby/child with feeding/sleeping difficulties
- birth defects/chronic illness/developmental delay.

Parents

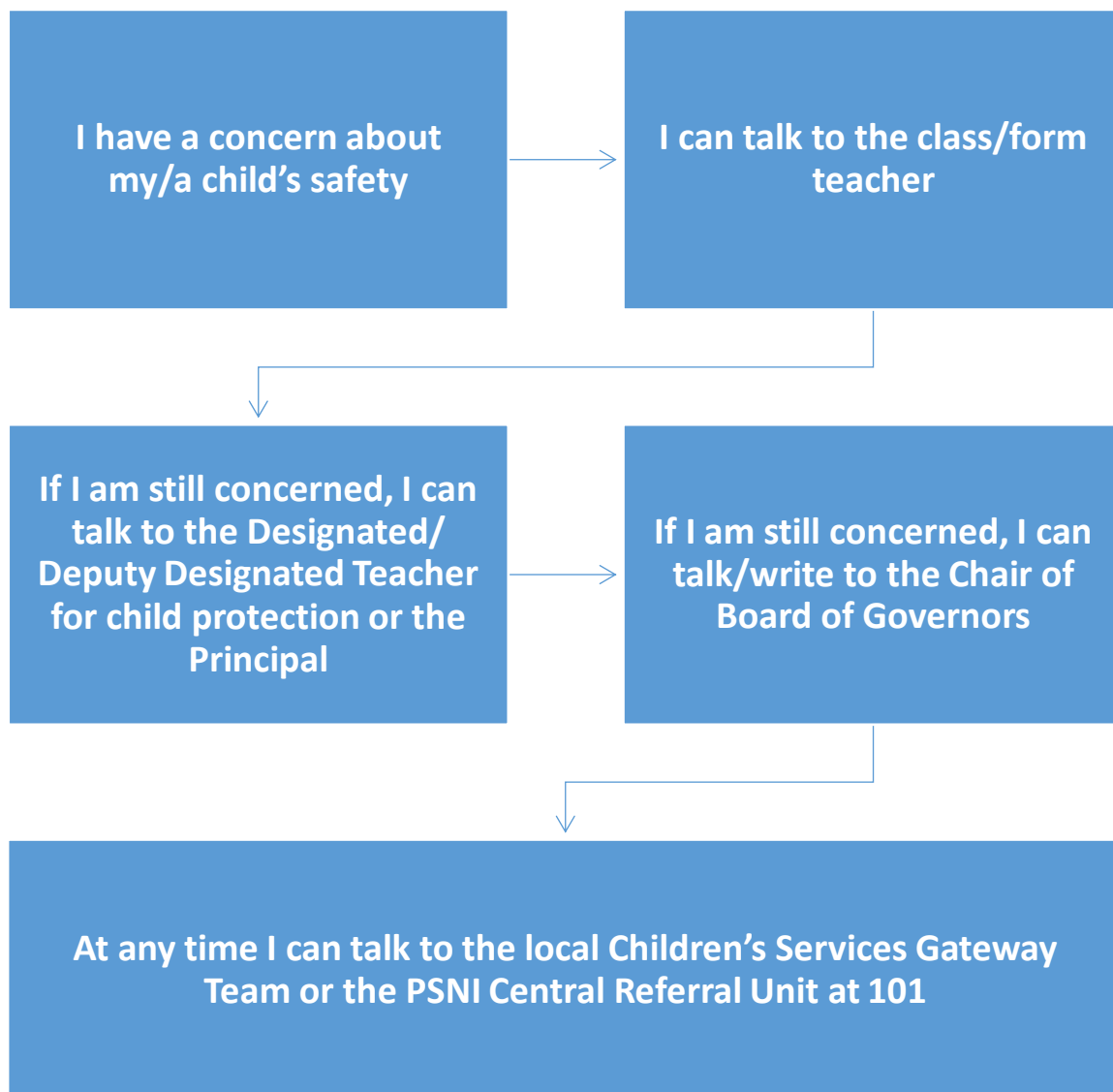
- both young and immature (i.e. aged 20 years and under) at birth of the child
- parental history of deprivation and/or abuse
- slow jealousy and rivalry with the child
- expect the child to meet their needs
- unrealistic expectations/rigid ideas about child development
- history of mental illness in one or both parents
- history of domestic violence
- drug and alcohol misuse in one or both parents of the child
- frequent changes of carers
- history of aggressive behaviour by either parent
- unplanned pregnancy
- unrealistic expectations of themselves as parents.

Home and Environmental Conditions

- unemployment
- no income/poverty
- poor housing or overcrowded housing
- social isolation and no supportive family
- the family moves frequently
- debt
- large family

APPENDIX 11

If a Parent Has a Potential Child Protection Concern Within the School

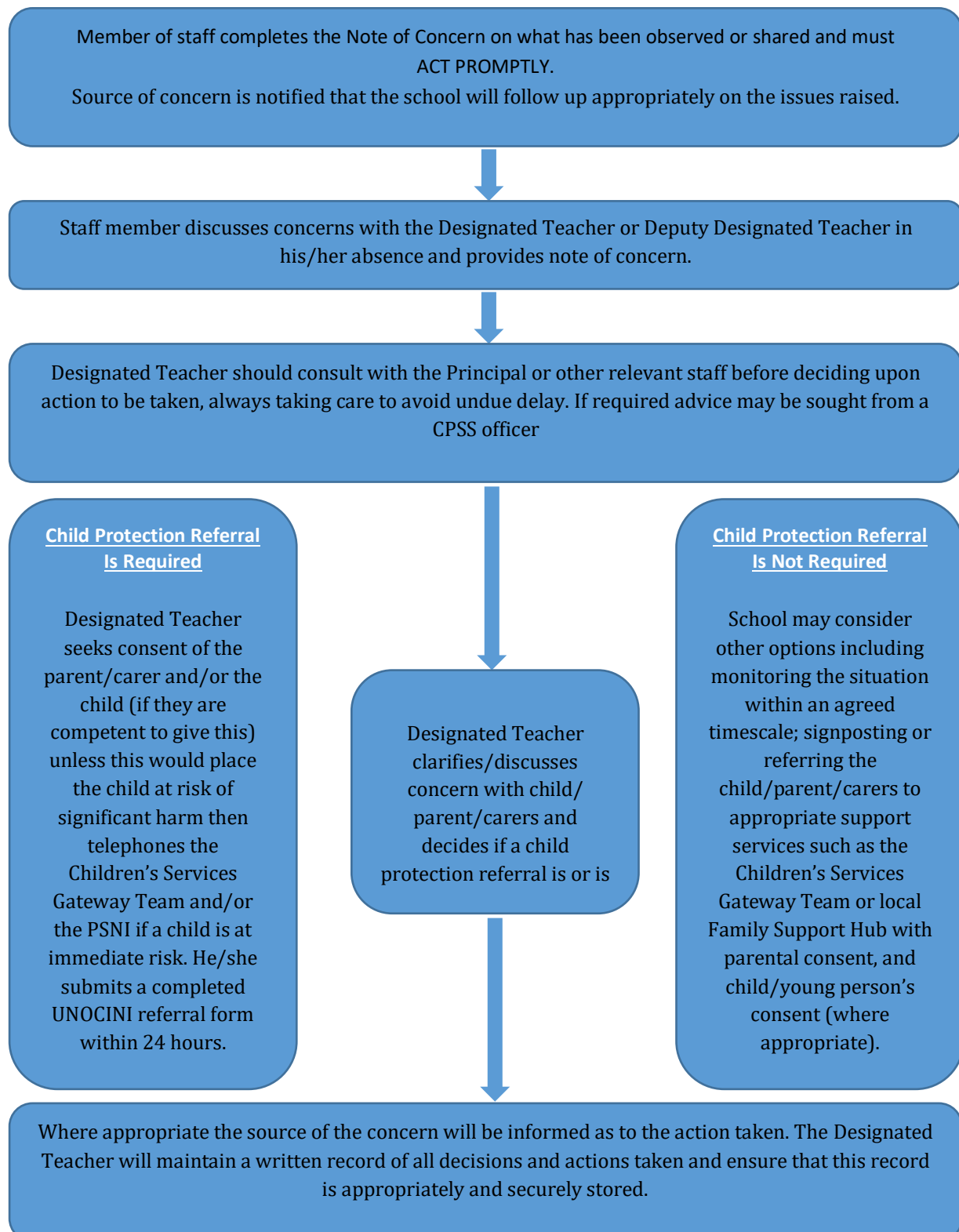


If you have escalated your concern as set out in the above flowchart and are of the view that it has not been addressed satisfactorily, you may revert to the school's complaints policy. This policy should culminate in the option for you to contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) who has the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

If a parent has a concern about a child's safety or suspect child abuse within the local community, it should be brought directly to the attention of the Children's Services Gateway Team.

APPENDIX 12

Procedure Where the School Has Concerns, or Has Been Given Information, about Possible Abuse by Someone Other Than a Member of Staff



APPENDIX 13

Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff

