

# **ORRITOR PRIMARY SCHOOL**



## **CHILD PROTECTION / SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

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## Introduction

Safeguarding children and young people is everyone's business, however, this policy is of particular importance to, and must be adhered to by, those who provide services to children, young people and families within Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit.

### **Safeguarding is more than Child Protection.**

Safeguarding begins with **promotion and preventative** activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection.

Child **protection** refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm.

## The Legislative Context

Obligations to safeguard children and young people and promote their welfare are contained in both international and domestic law. The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) is an international human rights treaty setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the child. It provides the overarching framework to guide the development of local laws, policies and services so that all children and young people are nurtured, protected and empowered. Each of the 41 Articles in the Convention detail a different type of right, all of which interact to form one integrated set of rights for children and young people. Those Articles with particular relevance for this policy include:

- **Article 3 (Best Interests of the Child)** the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration for all actions concerning children taken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies. This includes ensuring the child is given the protection and care necessary for their well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of others towards them. Organisations, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children must conform with appropriately set standards.
- **Article 4 (Protection of rights)** Governments have a responsibility to take all available measures to make sure children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. This involves assessing their social services, legal, health and educational systems, as well as funding for these services.
- **Article 12 (Voice of the Child)** A child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters which affect them, those views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. This is particularly the case for any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them. A child can either give their views directly, or have their views represented appropriately on their behalf.

- **Article 19 (Protection from all forms of violence):** Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and their right to be protected from harm and mistreatment is upheld.
- **Article 20 (Children deprived of family environment):** Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to be looked after properly by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language.
- **Articles 34 and 36 (Exploitation):** Governments should protect children from all forms of exploitation.
- **Article 39 (Rehabilitation of child victims):** Children who have been harmed should receive help to recover and reintegrate into society.

Children and young people have the right to express their opinions and to have those opinions heard and acted upon when appropriate. The child's views, however, will not necessarily determine the course of action to be taken, as ultimately, those with [parental responsibility](#) are responsible for keeping the child safe and must act in the best interests of the child.

The [Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#) (the Children Order) is the principal statute governing the care, upbringing and protection of children in Northern Ireland. It applies to all those who work with and care for children, whether parents, paid carers or volunteers. The Children Order provides the legislative framework within which this policy operates. The following principles are reflected in the Children Order and should underpin all strategies, policies, procedures, practice and services relating to safeguarding children and young people.

- **The child or young person's welfare is paramount** – The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration for the courts and in childcare practice. An appropriate balance should be struck between the child's rights and parent's rights. All efforts should be made to work co-operatively with parents, unless doing so is inconsistent with ensuring the child's safety.
- **The voice of the child or young person should be heard** – Children and young people have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously, taking account of their age and understanding. They should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may affect their lives and be provided with appropriate support to do so where that is required.
- **Parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped to stay together** – Parents have responsibility for their children rather than rights over them. In some circumstances, parents will share parental responsibility with others such as other carers or the statutory authorities.
- **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.
- **Prevention** – The importance of preventing problems occurring or worsening through the introduction of timely supportive measures.

- **Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances** – Where a child's needs can be met through the provision of support services, these should be provided. Both organisations and individual practitioners must respond proportionately to the needs of a child in accordance with their duties and the powers available to them.
- **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.
- **Evidence-based and informed decision making** – Decisions and actions taken by organisations and agencies must be considered, well informed and based on outcomes that are sensitive to, and, take account of, the child or young person's specific circumstances, the risks to which they are exposed, and their assessed needs.

The [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2007](#) as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 provides the legislative framework for the establishment of a Disclosure and Barring Service and requirements relating to individuals who work with children and vulnerable adults. This legislation defines 'regulated activity' with children and prevents persons on barred lists from engaging in regulated activity.

The [Children's Services Co-operation Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) places a requirement on individuals and organisations providing children's services to children to co-operate with each other to devise and implement cross cutting strategies. The Act is key to ensuring improved outcomes for children by supporting, enhancing and encouraging co-operation so that services are integrated from the point of view of the child or young person.

[The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland \(SBNI\)](#) - was established under the [Safeguarding Board \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2011](#) (the 2011 Act). The Act establishes a statutory objective for the SBNI, attributes a number of functions to it and imposes a number of duties upon it. The primary aim of the SBNI is to co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Northern Ireland. The Act requires member organisations to co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

The [Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland \(UNOCINI\) framework](#) is used to assess the child's needs and the most appropriate forms of intervention to meet identified needs of the child or young person. The framework recognises that services may be required from a range of professions, disciplines and organisations and services should be co-ordinated on a multi-disciplinary and inter-agency basis. Services should be planned and provided, in consultation with families, by professional staff and voluntary organisations with the appropriate skills and resources to meet those needs.

[Article 19 of the Education and Libraries \(NI\) Order 2003](#) places a responsibility on schools to have measures in place within their discipline policies to prevent and deal with bullying.

## Education

The Department of Education (DE) has lead responsibility for policy and strategy relating to the education of children in Northern Ireland. The Education Authority (EA) delivers educational services, including an Education Welfare Service within which sits the Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS).

## Schools

Schools and colleges have a vital role to play in educating children about risks of harm, how to prevent harm occurring and also to be alert to and respond appropriately to concerns.

Age-appropriate education programmes must be built into the school curriculum to make children and young people aware of risk factors, where support can be obtained and empower them to seek assistance when they are at risk of harm or being harmed.

**Every school** should establish a school safeguarding team comprising a core membership of the Principal (Chair), Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers, the Chair of the Board of Governors and a Designated Governor for Child Protection. More information on the role of Governors, Principals and Designated Teachers can be found in [the CPSSS School Governors Handbook Safeguarding Child Protection \(2015\)](#).

The DE guidance [Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection](#) provides detailed advice and guidance for schools and others in relation to their responsibilities for child protection and procedures to be followed to enable cases of suspected abuse to be properly considered and pursued.

Boards of Governors of grant-aided schools have statutory duties under [Articles 17](#) and [18 of the Education and Libraries \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2003](#) to promote and safeguard the welfare of their pupils, including protecting them from abuse when required.

Boards of Governors have a pastoral care responsibility towards their pupils and are expected to do whatever is reasonable to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils. They may be supported in delivering their broad safeguarding responsibilities by members of the school's Safeguarding Team and, if required, other staff with specific expertise, for example, the ICT Co-ordinator, or Special Education Needs Co-ordinator.

The school also has a range of other safeguarding policies, for example, policies on discipline, on bullying and on e-safety. These should be regularly reviewed, made available to parents and should explain the school's general approach to safeguarding within the context of the specific issue being addressed and the procedures that will be followed.

## **Safeguarding in Context**

***The primary responsibility for safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare rests with their parents or carers. They provide help, support and protection to their children.***

However, early intervention within a safeguarding context is important for all individuals and organisations who engage with children, young people and families.

**Education professionals have a responsibility to raise concerns about a child's welfare to the relevant HSCT where there is a concern relating to harm or risk of harm.** However, in many instances, these professionals may recognise situations that, whilst not requiring involvement of HSCTs in relation to safeguarding, are a cause for concern.

*Whether and when to intervene in such cases will always require the exercise of professional judgement.*

**It is therefore vital that concerns are acted on at an early stage in order to mitigate the risk of the child experiencing significant harm.**

Those who work with children, young people or families, in whatever capacity, have a particular responsibility to promote their welfare and ensure they are safe. All organisations and agencies working with children and young people must discharge their functions with regard to the need to safeguard children and young people, must have procedures in place for safeguarding, and ensure these are adhered to. When there are concerns about the welfare of a child or young person, early intervention and appropriate parental support can prevent problems escalating to a point where harm occurs and can improve the long term outcomes for the child.

For some children and families, a greater level of support will, on occasions, be required and the children will be assessed as being children in need. Targeted intervention will be provided to assist families to safeguard children and to meet the assessed needs of the child.

There will unfortunately be occasions where early intervention and support is not sufficient and a child is identified as being at risk of significant harm. In such cases statutory intervention to protect the child or young person will be required. This may include the child being the subject of a child protection plan, the child's name being placed on the child protection register, or the child becoming '**Looked After**' by a Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT).

## **Child in Need of Protection (definition)**

*A child in need of protection is a child who is at risk of, or likely to suffer, significant harm which can be attributed to a person or persons or organisation, either by an act of commission or omission; or a child who has suffered or is suffering significant harm as defined in [Article 50 of the Children Order](#).*

## Types of Abuse (Definitions DHSSPS 2016))

- 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 or significant harm.**

Harm can be caused by:

- Physical abuse;
  - Sexual abuse;
  - Emotional abuse;
  - Neglect; and
  - Exploitation.
- **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.
  - **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.



- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.
- **Exploitation** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

➤ **Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online.

**More specific forms of abuse** – eg Grooming, abusive images of children, Female Genital Mutilation, misuse of digital technologies, abuse by a person in a position of trust etc. are outlined in the booklet ( Section 7 pg 50 onwards);

**'Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland'**

from The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ([www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk))

## PROTECTION

This section outlines responsibilities for child protection, within and between school and other agencies.

### Raising a Concern

Anyone with an **immediate** concern about the safety or welfare of a child or young person should contact the PSNI without delay so that an emergency protective response can be made. A referral may also be made directly to the PSNI where a crime is alleged or suspected.

Anyone with a concern about the safety or welfare of a child or young person in circumstances other than an emergency should contact the HSCT Gateway Service in the relevant HSCT. This includes professionals and individuals from statutory or voluntary organisations, even where individuals are unsure about whether a concern needs to be referred, they can contact the HSCT to obtain advice. Advice can also be obtained from the NSPCC helpline.

Where an allegation of child abuse is made, by any person, or, where grounds exist to suspect that a child is being abused, *the referring professional should not in these circumstances be conducting further enquiries.*

Staff and volunteers in organisations should follow the school's own internal policy and procedures in raising a concern or making a referral about the safety or welfare of a child or young person to a HSCT. Schools must keep a record of all discussions to ensure that all relevant information is provided through an appropriate shared response to the HSCT.

Where the child or young person is **already known to HSCT**, the concern should, where possible, be raised with the social worker involved with the child or young person. If the child about whom a referral is made is **on the child protection register of**, or is **'Looked After'**, the HSCT Gateway Service who receives the referral should involve the HSCT responsible for the child without delay.

### The Child Protection Register (CPR) and Child Protection Plans (CPP)

The CPR serves as a register of names of children in respect of whom a multi-disciplinary and inter-agency decision has been made at a Child Protection Case Conference. The decision to add a child's name to the CPR means he/she has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm and requires an inter-agency and multi-disciplinary CPP to ensure their protection.

Although the primary responsibility for ensuring the CPP is drawn up and implemented lies with HSCT social workers, other professionals and agencies may be required to contribute to the execution of the plan.

# ORRITOR PRIMARY SCHOOL – SAFEGUARDING POLICY

## Policy Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- **Embed a culture** which recognises the child's or young person's fundamental right to be safe and promote their general welfare;
- Ensure the promotion of a **child centred approach**, which is based on obtaining the views of children and young people and an understanding of their needs and rights;
- As far as possible, **prevent** harm occurring by increasing school staff awareness of harm and its effects on children and young people and where appropriate equip, empower and or support them to keep themselves safe;
- Promote **early identification** of needs and/or risk to children and young people who may require assistance;
- Promote **early intervention** to ensure families, children and young people can access and receive help and support at an early point to prevent their situations deteriorating;
- Establish clearly defined **processes of reporting** risk of harm toward children and young people which are well-understood and put in place;
- Ensure **responses** to risks of harm are proportionate, timely, professional, legal and ethical;

## Safeguarding

### **Safeguarding is more than Child Protection.**

Safeguarding begins with **promotion and preventative** activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection.

Child **protection** refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm.

Within this policy, the term **safeguarding** is intended to be used in its widest sense, encompassing the full range of promotion, prevention and protection activity. Effective safeguarding activity will:

- **Promote** the welfare for the child and young person;
- **Prevent** harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate, timely intervention; and
- **Protect** children and young people from harm when this is required.

All children and young people have a fundamental right to be safeguarded from harm. The welfare of children and young people must be promoted and they must be given every

opportunity to develop to their full potential, free from harm through abuse, exploitation and neglect.

### **Child Protection Principles**

The following principles form the basis for effective child protection activity and underpin the guidance as follows:-

- The child's welfare must always be paramount; this overrides all other considerations; where a child is disabled or has special needs these must be taken into consideration.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting the children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is a conflict, the child's interests must always come first.
- Children have the right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may effect their lives. Where a child has a disability, special assistance should be sought to achieve this.
- Parents/carers have the right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters which affect their family
- Actions taken to protect the child (including investigation) should not in themselves be abusive by causing the child unnecessary distress or further harm.
- Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation; the child's needs should be considered in the context of the family. Agencies' actions must be considered and well informed so that they are sensitive to, and take account of, the child's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race, and any special needs.
- Where it is necessary to protect the child from further abuse, alternatives which do not involve moving the child and which minimise disruption of the family should be explored.
- All agencies concerned with the protection of children must work together in the best interests of children and their families. Each agency must have an understanding of each other's functions, responsibilities and priorities in relation to children and commit to maintaining effective communication.

Where an allegation of child abuse is made, by any person, or, where grounds exist to suspect that a child is being abused, *the referring professional should not in these circumstances be conducting further enquiries.*

Staff and volunteers should follow the school's own internal policy and procedures (see below) in raising a concern or making a referral about the safety or welfare of a child or young person

to a HSCT. Schools must keep a record of all discussions to ensure that all relevant information is provided through an appropriate shared response to the HSCT.

### **School Procedure**

Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit notes and adheres to the 4 main areas of responsibility in family support and child protection. These are the areas of

1. recognition,
2. response,
3. co-operation to protect and
4. prevention

We trust parents will share and agree with our practice in these areas. Parents will be made aware of the school's responsibilities and procedures.

### **Recognition**

All school staff, teaching and non-teaching, will be made aware of the definitions of 'a child in need' and child abuse, in order to recognise and respond to it.

Guidance on the identification of possible abuse is contained within the publication

**'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection' (DENI 1999)** (pg 10 Paras 14 – 16).

The types of abuse are also explained on page 6 and 7 of this document and within the booklet ;

**'Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland'** ( Section 7 pg 50 onwards) from The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety ([www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk))

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.

## **Response**

All school staff will be made aware of their responsibility, if informed by a child, parent or other person, if they have suspicions about any child or adult, to communicate immediately with the designated (or deputy designated) teacher.

**The designated teacher is:- Mr K. Wright**

**The Deputy Designated teachers :- Mrs. K. Bell (Prim) and Miss Thompson (Nurs)**

**The Boards of Governors** have statutory duties under [Articles 17](#) and [18 of the Education and Libraries \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2003](#) to promote and safeguard the welfare of their pupils, including protecting them from abuse when required. Boards of Governors have a pastoral care responsibility towards their pupils and are expected to do whatever is reasonable to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils.

**Orritor Primary School has** a school safeguarding team comprising of the Principal (Designated Teacher) and Deputy Designated Teachers (Mrs Bell and Miss Thompson), the Chair of the Board of Governors and a Designated Governor for Child Protection.

They may be supported in delivering their broad safeguarding responsibilities by members of the school's Safeguarding Team and, if required, other staff with specific expertise, for example, the ICT Co-ordinator, or Special Education Needs Co-ordinator.

It is expected that these people should be familiar and supportive of the EA and the school's procedure for receiving, recording and reporting suspected cases of abuse, and complaints about the behaviour of all members of staff. Proper procedures, as led down in paras 28 – 35 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection', will be followed.

Schools should also have a range of other safeguarding policies, for example, policies on promoting positive behaviour, on bullying and on e-safety. These should be regularly reviewed, made available to parents and should explain the school's general approach to safeguarding within the context of the specific issue being addressed and the procedures that will be followed.

## **Co-operating to Support and Protect children.**

Effective support and protection of children requires the expertise and skills of parents and each agency whose work brings them into contact with children. Schools possess particular knowledge which they must contribute in the multi-agency responsibility to support and protect children.

Where an allegation of child abuse is made, by any person, or, where grounds exist to suspect that a child is being abused, the referring professional should not in these circumstances be conducting further enquiries.

Staff and volunteers in organisations should follow the school's own internal policy and procedures (see below) in raising a concern or making a referral about the safety or welfare of a child or young person to a HSCT. Schools must keep a record of all discussions to ensure that all relevant information is provided through an appropriate shared response to the HSCT.

If any information is received by the school, which suggests a young person is being sexually exploited, or at risk of sexual exploitation, the Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures must be complied with. A report should be made to the relevant HSCT or PSNI. The PSNI should be involved as early as possible in the investigative process 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(s) to be put in place without delay.

## **Parents**

If a parent has concerns about what is happening in school, he or she should ask to speak to the school's designated teacher for Child Abuse issues. If the parent is unhappy about this for any reason, they should ask to speak to the school principal or chairperson of the Board of Governors. If the parent is unhappy about calling the school, he or she should call the PSNI Central Referral Unit – Tel 02890 259299 (or 101 ext 30299)

## **Children**

Children who are being abused and want to talk to someone, can either speak to the designated teacher – or any teacher of his/her choice. If unhappy about talking to someone in the school, children can ring the Northern Ireland Childline on 0800 212888, or NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0800 800500. Calls are free.

## Procedures

### **What to do when teachers/auxiliary staff see signs that cause them concern.**

Auxiliary / teaching staff should immediately bring those concerns to the attention of the class teacher, the designated or deputy designated teacher.

- Class teachers should not investigate.
- Seek clarification from the child by saying “Tell me what happened”, nothing else.
- Listen to the child – do not interrupt if he/she is freely recalling events.
- Make a note of the discussion as soon as possible – record the time, date, place and people present, as well as what was said.
- Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail or sketched. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A CHILD’S CLOTHING BE REMOVED.
- 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 actual words used.
- Do not give the child or young person undertakings of confidentiality but reassure them that the information will only be disclosed to those professionals that need to know. ‘Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection’ pg11 paras 17 - 22
- Teachers should be aware that the note of their discussions might need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings. (DENI 10/11:18) para 22
- It is not the responsibility of teachers and other educational staff to carry out investigations with cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child’s family or carers.
- Class teacher refers the matter to the designated teacher, or in that teacher’s absence, to the deputy designated teacher, and full notes are made.
- The designated teacher, if different from the principal, will meet with the Principal to make a case for action and ensure a written record is made.



## **Prevention**

Children cannot be protected by good recognition and response alone. We have to offer supportive environments to children who are being abused, have been abused and may in the future be abused. All children are vulnerable.

The school aims to develop and provide friendly, secure environment with a 'child protection ethos' (DENI Circular 1997/4 page 6) and a preventative curriculum. We aim to involve the whole school in creating a 'listening school'.

The school can offer protection on two levels:

- Immediate protection: creating a listening environment that makes it easier for children to share their concerns.
- Long term protection, enhancing self esteem and encouraging pro-social skill, breaking the cycle of abusive behaviour.

Within the school curriculum time staff use various measures to help prevent child abuse and promote a 'listening' culture. Circle time within PDMU, Assemblies and presentations by various agencies (eg PSNI, NSPCC) are all used to reassure children of the safety of the school and the options available to them if they wish to disclose or share any concerns. These sessions also provide them with the knowledge and skills to help them keep themselves safe.

## **Education Welfare Officers (EWOs)**

The EA also employs Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) to provide a specialist service to support children, young people, their parents or carers in engaging constructively with schools where there are concerns about irregular attendance/non-attendance. Since 2000, EWOs appointed to post must be qualified social workers and work closely with social services and other agencies where required.

## **Staff Vetting and Conduct**

The Board of Governors will ensure that the school has and follows the Code of Practice for the conduct of all members of staff, teaching and non teaching, towards the pupils attending the school – DENI Publication 'Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection' Pg71 Appendices 9 – 11). The Code of Practice will cover all activities organised in and by the school.

## **Volunteers / beyond school staff Vetting**

The school will ensure that before persons beyond the school staff are invited to be involved as helpers/leaders on trips, residential visits, or other out of school activities are subject to vetting procedures in keeping with the current arrangements for the care and protection of young people. Those involved should also receive appropriate training and preparation for these activities.

The school will comply with the following circulars and letters regarding Vetting

- [Circular 2006/06 \[pdf / 123KB\]](#) Guidance on safer recruitment practices for education authorities
- [Circular 2006/07 \[pdf / 36KB\]](#) Guidance for schools on the employment of substitute teachers
- [Circular 2006/08 \[pdf / 30KB\]](#) Guidance for schools on the requirement for child protection training in relation to interviewing and selection panels
- [Circular 2006/09 \[pdf / 39KB\]](#) Guidance on the vetting of paid and unpaid staff
- [Circular 2006/25 \[pdf / 45KB\]](#) Guidance on the requirement for vetting of school governors
- [Circular 2008/03 \[pdf / 934KB\]](#) Pre-employment checking of persons to work in schools
- [Circular 2008/10 \[pdf / 34KB\]](#) From 1st August 2008 substitute teachers must be booked on line via NISTR
- [Circular 2012/19 \[pdf / 87KB\]](#) Guidance for schools and employing authorities on changes to pre-employment checking and safer recruitment practices
- [Circular 2013/01 \[pdf / 104KB\]](#) Guidance for schools and employing authorities on pre-employment vetting checking and safer recruitment practices

SELB / EA Circular [2014/163 Important Update in Relation To a Change to the Access NI Disclosure Certificate Application](#)

*[ACCESSNI DISCLOSURE CERTIFICATE APPLICATION FORM \(DCAF 09/12\)](#)*

### **Information about children on the child protection register.**

The co-ordinator from social services will inform the school if a child's name has been placed on (or removed from) the child protection register, or when a child whose name is on the register starts school.

When such a child changes school, the school they leave should inform the new school immediately that their name is on the register, and destroy all child protection records on the child, including records of case conferences, and should inform the co-ordinator. The receiving school should contact social services for relevant information.

### **Monitoring and supporting pupils on the child protection register.**

The school will monitor pupils whose names appear on the child protection register in line with what has been agreed in each child's protection plan, if possible. The plan sets out the role of the child's parents and various agencies in protecting the child. For schools, this would include alerting either the child's protection co-ordinator or the Education Welfare Officer when the pupil is absent for more than a few days, or on a regular basis, or to any signs which suggest a deterioration in the pupil's home circumstances.

## Complaints Against School Staff

Where a complaint is made about possible abuse by a member of staff of the school, the procedures set out in DE Circular 2015/13 should be followed.

- [Circular 2015/13 \[pdf / 243KB\]](#) Dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff

As set out in Circular 2015/13, all allegations of a child abuse nature **must** be recorded in the Record of Child Abuse Complaints book, which must be retained securely. A record of this should also be placed on the relevant pupil's Child Protection File.

It is important that ALL allegations are recorded to ensure a school can monitor allegations made and identify causes or patterns of concern at an early stage. It is also important that Boards of Governors are fully informed of all complaints to ensure they are complying with their statutory responsibilities under the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003

These records should be signed and dated by the Principal. If the Principal is the subject of the concern, the allegation should be reported immediately to the Chair of the Board of Governors, Deputy Chairperson, Designated Governor for Child Protection and the person appointed to be the Lead Individual, and the record retained in the school, on both the child's Child Protection File and the file of the member of staff concerned.

If, on foot of a subsequent investigation by one of the investigating agencies, the **member of staff concerned is totally exonerated**:

- the record on the staff member's file must be expunged
- the entry in the Record of Child Abuse Complaints struck through with an explanation entered
- the record on the child's file should be noted with the outcome of the investigation, and should stand until the child's D.O.B +30 years.

Given the number of recent historical allegations, *unless the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated*, the record should be retained **indefinitely**.

If a closure or an amalgamation of an educational establishment(s) occurs or when a member of staff retires, leaves or changes post, advice should be sought from the relevant Employing Authority and/or the Information Commissioner's Office.

## **Child Protection Records Management Policy.**

‘CHILD PROTECTION: RECORD KEEPING IN SCHOOLS’ - Circular 2016/ 20 refers.

Accurate recording of concerns and action taken is essential in helping schools identify causes for concern at an early stage and to help schools monitor and manage its safeguarding practices. School staff should be aware of the need to record and report any child protection concerns and the appropriate procedures to be followed.

Each school has a responsibility to maintain its records and record keeping systems. The Board of Governors should ensure that the arrangements operated by the school for the retention, management and release of public records comply with statutory requirements. A court may require the school to provide its full records on the child.

Professional judgement will be required in assessing a concern and deciding when to commence a ‘child protection record’. Child abuse includes:

- neglect
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- exploitation
- domestic and sexual violence and abuse
- child sexual exploitation
- female genital mutilation
- children who display harmful sexualised behaviour

**However, a child protection record might be commenced if there is evidence of a safeguarding risk of, for example, self harm, suicidal ideation or other behaviours that cause concern.**

### **Note of Concern**

Any member of staff who has a concern about the welfare or safety of a child or young person should complete a **Note of Concern** (see Annex D). Notes must be made as soon as possible after the incident to ensure an expedient response, and certainly within 24 hours to maintain the accuracy and content of the report.

*For some children a one-off serious incident or concern may occur and staff will have no doubt that this must be immediately recorded and reported. More often, however, it is the accumulation of a number of small incidents, events or observations that can provide the evidence of harm being caused to a child.*

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

## UNOCINI

The 'Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland' (UNOCINI) is a framework to support professionals in assessment and planning to better meet the needs of children and their family. The UNOCINI referral form will be completed whenever staff wish to refer a child or young person to children's social services for support, safeguarding or a fuller assessment of a child's needs. (see new format Oct 2016 in appendix).

If you are concerned that a child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm, then an **urgent** referral to children's social services through the local Gateway Service must be made. When making an urgent referral by telephone, the Duty Social Worker will advise you that you will be required to confirm your referral in writing on a UNOCINI within 24 hours.

**Non-urgent** referrals i.e. child in need/ family support referrals should be made in writing using the UNOCINI Referral form.

*Please remember that the consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) must normally be given prior to a referral. An exception can be made when you consider that a child is in need of safeguarding and to try and gain consent may increase the risk to a child or young person. Issues of consent (including when consent is not forthcoming) must always be clearly recorded.*

### Child Protection File

The DT should store each Note of Concern and copy UNOCINI documents in the child's **Child Protection File** and supplement it with all other records created and acquired as the management of the concern progresses. A Child Protection File is separate to the School Pupil/ Educational Record and must be stored securely.

The Child Protection File should contain:

- Chronology of events/ action taken
- All records of concern
- Any notes initially recorded, including in the form of notebooks/diaries which should be kept securely with the child protection file
- Records of discussions and telephone calls (with colleagues, parents and children/young people and other agencies or services)
- Correspondence with other organisations - sent and received
- Referral forms – both for support services and specialist services (irrespective of outcome)
- Formal plans linked to the child e.g. child protection plan, child in need plan
- Risk assessments
- Risk Management Plans/ Individual Safety and Support Plans
- School reports to interagency meetings and conferences
- Minutes of interagency meetings e.g. child in need, strategy, child protection conference
- Any other relevant notes/ papers

Relevant and accurate records are essential to inform effective decision making and assist in the sharing of appropriate information. **They should contain factual information or be clearly specified as unsubstantiated** and should include all relevant information even if it appears contradictory.

Any significant event or change which has an impact on the child's welfare must be included in the Child Protection File, and noted on the chronology of events/ action taken, even if it seems to be contradictory. As a guideline, although not exhaustive, the following may be relevant:

- **Change of circumstances:** changes of carer, address, legal status, school, family circumstances and household composition.
- **Issues for the child:** physical or mental health issues, incidents of abuse, losses, developmental issues, incidents of running away/going missing, incidents re bullying, offending or police involvement.
- **Family issues:** changes in family composition, loss and separation, domestic violence, financial or housing problems, physical or mental health, substance misuse, homelessness, imprisonment, victimisation.
- **Professional involvement:** referrals made, involvement of other agencies, assessments, significant decisions, interventions, social services involvement.

Any decisions made must be recorded together with reasons for the agreed action, this will be vital to any future processes, such as retrospective or historical allegations and Case Management Reviews. It is vitally important to record all relevant details, regardless of whether or not the concerns are shared with either the police or social services.

When Social Services inform the school that a child's name has been placed on the Trusts' **Child Protection Register (CPR)**, the school must maintain a record of this fact and associated documentation from Social Services on the child's Child Protection file.

## **Complaints Against School Staff**

Where a complaint is made about possible abuse by a member of staff of the school, the procedures set out in DE Circular 2015/13 should be followed.

As set out in Circular 2015/13, all allegations of a child abuse nature **must** be recorded in the Record of Child Abuse Complaints book, which must be retained securely. A record of this should also be placed on the relevant pupil's Child Protection File.

It is important that ALL allegations are recorded to ensure a school can monitor allegations made and identify causes or patterns of concern at an early stage. It is also important that Boards of Governors are fully informed of all complaints to ensure they are complying with their statutory responsibilities under the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003

These records should be signed and dated by the Principal. If the Principal is the subject of the concern, the allegation should be reported immediately to the Chair of the Board of Governors, Deputy Chairperson, Designated Governor for Child Protection and the person appointed to be

the Lead Individual, and the record retained in the school, on both the child's Child Protection File and the file of the member of staff concerned.

If, on foot of a subsequent investigation by one of the investigating agencies, the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated:

- the record on the staff member's file must be expunged
- the entry in the Record of Child Abuse Complaints struck through with an explanation entered
- the record on the child's file should be noted with the outcome of the investigation, and should stand until the child's D.O.B +30 years.

Given the number of recent historical allegations, unless the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated, the record should be retained **indefinitely**. If a closure or an amalgamation of an educational establishment(s) occurs or when a member of staff retires, leaves or changes post, advice should be sought from the relevant Employing Authority and/or the Information Commissioner's Office.

### **Storage of records**

Each school should have a separate secure confidential filing system for Child Protection concerns, ideally in a fireproof filing cabinet. Other child protection records including the school's confidential Record of Child Abuse Complaints should also be stored here. The filing cabinet should be accessible to only the Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teacher or Principal. The cabinet is not accessible to anyone else, including administrative staff, the ETI and members of the Board of Governors. The keys to the cabinet should not be removed from the premises and should be stored securely in a key safe. The ETI will seek assurance that child protection records are held securely and in a confidential manner.

Child Protection Records must not be removed from the school premises, except when taken to a case planning meeting in respect of the child, or on foot of a court order. If information needs to be taken out of the school, it **must be transported securely** and a record should be kept of when it was removed, by whom, for what purpose, and when it was returned.

### **Storing Information Electronically**

If information is held electronically, whether on a laptop or on a portable memory device, **all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected**.

Records can be stored electronically on the C2k system. Principals have access to 10 private folders on the C2k system and can allocate these for the exclusive use of one or more nominated staff. One, or more, of these folders can be allocated for Child Protection with access limited to the Principal, Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher.

Child Protection records may be exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 in cases where disclosure may cause serious physical or emotional harm to the child or any other person. This means that neither pupils nor their parents have an automatic right to access them. However, the exemption only applies to the information that may cause harm

and is not a blanket exemption for the file as a whole. In addition, the exemption can only be relied upon if it is endorsed by the opinion of an appropriate health professional.

The exemption should be applied on a case-by-case basis, applying in each case the test of prejudice. Where the Principal receives a request for subject access from a pupil or his/her parent, or from a member of staff against whom an allegation has been made, and is in doubt whether the data should be disclosed, the person responsible for information management in the Education Authority Region should be consulted.

Within a school, information should only be shared with staff who require access to it, in order to work in a safe and informed way with the child and family. The DT should record who information is shared with, when, and the reasons for this. All staff should understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the consequences of any breach.

Staff must always consider the safety and welfare of the child when making decisions about whether to share confidential information. Subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 the disclosure of confidential information is allowed when necessary to protect or safeguard a child.

Any information relating to a third party (another child or adult) should not normally be made available to anyone, unless the third party gives explicit consent to the disclosure being made. Records demanded by a court must be redacted to protect the identity of a third party. *For this reason, and in the general interests of confidentiality, concerns about pupils should be recorded on an individual basis.*

### **Reporting to Board of Governors**

It is best practice that Child Protection is a standing agenda item for Board of Governor meetings and that the Designated Teacher prepares a report for the meeting of all child protection activities and a full annual report for the Board of Governors on all Child Protection matters. The annual report should include information such as what child protection training has been provided for staff/volunteers, statistics in relation to child protection concerns e.g. the number of referrals to Social Services and number of children on the child protection register, the number of complaints against staff, any safeguarding /child protection initiatives delivered as part of the schools preventative curriculum, policy reviews undertaken. All reports **must be anonymised** in keeping with the principle of confidentiality.

The school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints should be made available to the Board of Governors at least annually. If an allegation is recorded anonymised information will be shared with Governors including what action was taken and the outcome of the complaint. The Chair should sign and date the Record of Child Abuse Complaints annually, even if there have been no entries. The Education Training Inspectorate will ask to see the Record and Chair's signature during inspections, but not the content or detail of complaints.



## **Education Training Inspectorate (ETI)**

The ETI are not entitled to see the content of any child protection record, however, they do need to be assured that records exist and are held in a secure and confidential manner. They will also request sight of the Record of Child Abuse Complaints and, while they are not entitled to view the content, they will check that the book is completed and signed off annually by the Chair of the Board of Governors.

The relevant self evaluation pro-forma will be completed to assist ETI in the evaluation of our safeguarding measures (see cpsss\_safeguarding\_proforma\_with\_prompts\_primary in accompanying file 'Circulars and letters')

## **Transfer of Records**

Under the Education (Pupil Records and Reporting) (Transitional) Regulations (NI) 2007, Boards of Governors are not required to transfer the child protection records. However, where there have been, or are current, concerns about a pupil the school should consider what information should be shared with the new school. The Designated Teacher is responsible for ensuring that copies of relevant child protection records are transferred to the DT of the receiving school in the most secure and appropriate manner to minimise the risk of any data breach.

*When a child on whom the school holds safeguarding or child protection information leaves the school and the school are unaware of the new school they must notify the Education Welfare Service at the Education Authority. The school must retain the child's child protection records and forward the relevant information to the receiving school when the child has been traced.*

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

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

**Closure**

When a pupil leaves the school or child protection concerns cease to be current or ongoing, and records cease to be of active use other than for reference purposes, the child's individual Child Protection File should be closed. The DT should consult the School's Disposal of Records Schedule, review the file and mark the front cover of the file indicating the date on which the file can be destroyed, for example, 30 years from the pupil's date of birth. Closing a file simply means that no further papers can be added. If new concerns arise a new file can be opened and cross-referenced with the previous record.

## Disposal

At the end of the agreed retention period records should be securely disposed of, for example, incinerated or shredded in the presence of a member of the school or entrusted to a firm specialising in the destruction of confidential material. Information held electronically within private folders on the C2k system should also be deleted within the timescales set.

A Disposal of records Policy for this school is available.

## GUIDANCE

- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (March 2016) at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>
- DE: Model Schools Disposal of Documents Schedule <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/disposal-school-records>
- Accessing Pupils' Information (Information Commissioners Office) <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/schools/pupils-info/>
- UNOCINI – [Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland \(UNOCINI\) framework](#)
- CPSSS School Governors Handbook (2015) (issued by Child Protection Support Service for Schools) <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/cpsss-board-governors-handbook>
- DE Circular 1999/10: Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/pastoral-care-schools-child-protection>
- DE Circular 2003/13: Welfare and Protection of Pupils <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-200313-welfare-and-protection-pupils-education-and-libraries-ni-order-2003>
- DE Circular 2015/13: Dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201513-dealing-allegations-abuse-against-member-staff>
- Education Authority website: <http://www.eani.org.uk/#>
- ACPC (Area Child Protection Committee) policies and procedures and other information is available on the SBNI website at: <http://www.safeguardingni.org/resources>

The weblink below will provide access to other pertinent circulars and DE letters;

<http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection/> copies of many of these are also held on computer under the Child protection file on staff documents.

**PROFORMA**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**NOTE OF CONCERN**

**CHILD PROTECTION RECORD - REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER**

Name of Pupil:
Year Group:
Date, 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: <input type="checkbox"/> No: <input type="checkbox"/>
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:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of staff member making the report: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Staff Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Designated Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Policy Review**

The school will update this policy and procedure in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary, and review it annually. Parents will be fully informed of the Child Protection Policy and this will be made available for viewing. Child protection literature will be given to parents at induction meetings for entry into Primary One. Parents will be advised of the Child Protection Policy and who the designated teachers are. A simplified flow chart outlining how to voice a concern will be placed on the school website and given to every parent at induction meetings. It will also be include on the Annual Governor's report every 2/3 years.