

**LURGAN COLLEGE**

**CHILD PROTECTION /  
SAFEGUARDING POLICY**



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## **1. Child protection ethos**

We in Lurgan College have a responsibility for the safeguarding and child protection, of the children in our care. We will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This policy sets out guidance on the action which is required where abuse or harm of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school.

## **2. Key principles of safeguarding and child protection**

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' (DOH, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools' (DENI Circular 2017/04) and the Safeguarding Board for NI Core Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

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

- The child or young person's welfare is paramount
- The voice of the child or young person should be heard
- Parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together
- Partnership
- Prevention
- Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances
- Protection
- Evidence based and informed decision making

## **3. Other Related Policies**

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Acceptable use of ICT and the Internet
- Administration of Medicines
- Anti-Bullying
- Attendance
- Bring Your Own Device
- Educational Visits
- Health and Safety
- Online Safety
- Pastoral Care
- Positive Behaviour
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Special Educational Needs

These policies are available to parents and any parent requiring a copy should contact the School Office or visit the school website at [www.lurgancollege.co.uk](http://www.lurgancollege.co.uk)

#### **4. School safeguarding team**

The following are members of the school's Safeguarding Team

- Principal – Mr T. Robinson
- Designated Teacher – Dr N. McKee
- Deputy Designated Teacher – Mr G. Caldwell
- Chair of the Board of Governors – Mr S. Abraham
- Designated Governor for Child Protection – Mrs G. Cuthbert
- Deputy Designated Governor for Child Protection – Mr P. Maxwell

#### **5. Roles and responsibilities**

##### **5.1 The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher**

Every school is required to appoint a Designated Teacher with responsibility for Child Protection. They must also appoint a Deputy Designated Teacher who as a member of the Safeguarding Team will actively support the Designated Teacher in carrying out the following duties:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, roles and responsibilities
- Promote a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school
- Organise the induction and training for all school staff including support staff
- Lead in the development of the school's Child Protection Policy
- Be available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff or parents
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of the school's Child Protection arrangements for parents
- Make referrals to Social Services Gateway Team or the PSNI Central Referral Unit, where appropriate
- Maintain a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services e.g. Family Support Hubs
- Liaise with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- Keep the school Principal informed
- Provide written reports to the Board of Governors regarding child protection

##### **5.2 The Principal**

The Principal must ensure that:

- As secretary to the Board of Governors, assists in fulfilling its safeguarding and child protection duties
- DENI 2017/04 is implemented within the school
- He attends training on Managing Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Safeguarding and Child Protection systems are established and managed within the school
- A Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher are appointed, managed and enabled to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities
- All staff receive child protection training
- The school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints is maintained

- New staff and volunteers have safeguarding and child protection awareness sessions as part of an induction programme
- He takes the lead in managing child protection concerns relating to staff
- He establishes and manages the operational systems for safeguarding and child protection
- All necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- Safe and effective recruitment and selection procedures are followed
- The Governors are kept informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to safeguarding and child protection, ensuring that any circulars and guidance from the Department of Education is shared promptly
- The Chairman of the Board of Governors (and, when appropriate, the Board of Governors) is kept informed
- Child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors meetings and termly updates and an annual report are provided
- Confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.
- The school's Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually and that parents and pupils receive a copy, or summary of this policy, at intake and at a minimum every 2 years

### **5.3 Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors must ensure that the school fulfils its responsibilities in keeping with current legislation and DE guidance including:

- 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 implemented by all staff.
- The Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of it and the complaints procedure every two years.
- 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. See the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016
- 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 termly updates and a full written annual report on all 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
- The school maintains the following child protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff and 2016/20 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools.

## 5.4 The Chair of the Board of Governors

- Has a pivotal role in creating and maintaining a safeguarding ethos within the school environment
- Receives training from CPSS and Human Resources
- Assumes lead responsibility in the event of a child protection complaint/concern about the Principal
- Ensures compliance with legislation, child protection record keeping and policies; this includes signing and dating the Record of Child Abuse Complaints annually, even if there have been no entries
- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment and selection training provided by the Education Authority CPSS and the Governor Support and Human Resource departments.

## 5.5 The Designated Governor for Child Protection

The Designated Governor will take the lead in safeguarding/child protection issues in order to be able to advise the Governors on:

- The role of the Designated Teachers
- The content of Child Protection Policies
- The content of a Code of Conduct for adults within the school
- The content of the termly updates and full annual Designated Teacher's report
- Recruitment, selection and vetting and induction of staff

The Designated Governor for Child Protection should avail of child protection awareness training delivered by Child Protection Support Service (CPSS).

## 5.6 Other members of school staff

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

### The member of staff must:

- Avail of whole school training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children
- Where staff see signs which cause them concern, or if a child makes a disclosure, they should follow the procedure below:
  - Receive** – actively listen and accept what is being said without interrupting, displaying shock or disbelief and support the child. Seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Do **not** panic, ask leading questions, make the child repeat the story unnecessarily, investigate or give the child a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosure. Where a member of the non-teaching staff sees signs which cause them concern, he/she should immediately bring them to the attention of either a teacher or the Designated Teacher, and it may be appropriate for the necessary clarification to be carried out by the teacher.
  - Reassure** - the child that they are not at fault and have done the right thing to talk about it. Reassure them that the information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know.
  - Respond** – stay calm, act promptly and support the child. Explain what you are going to do, what they have to do next and to whom they have to talk.

**Record** - make a concise written record of their concerns or a child's disclosure using his/her exact words and complete a Note of Concern (Appendix 1). Signs of physical injury observed should be observed in detail, but under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed, or a photograph taken. 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. Staff should **not** ask the child to write an account of their disclosure for the record.

**Refer** - concerns or disclosures to the Designated/Deputy Teacher for Child Protection

**In addition, the Head of Year/House Teacher/Head of House/Subject Teacher should:**

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

### **Support Staff**

- If any member of the support staff has concerns about a child or staff member they should report these concerns to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available. A detailed written record of the concerns will be made and any further necessary action will be taken.

## **5.7 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 should play their part in safeguarding by:

- Telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence and sending in a note on the child's return to school. This assures the school that the parent/carer knows about the absence
- Informing the school if the child has a medical condition or educational need
- Informing the school if there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school
- Letting the school know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home
- Informing the school if there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child
- Informing the school 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
- Familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Acceptable Use of ICT and the Internet, Online Safety, BOYD, and Child Protection Policies
- Reporting to the Office when they visit the school
- Raising concerns they have in relation to their child, with the school.

## **6. Child Protection Definitions**

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2016).

### **6.1 Definition of harm**

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 in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. 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. There are different types of abuse and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm.**

### **6.2 Harm can be caused by:**

**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.

**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 the 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 the opportunity 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.

**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.

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. Children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse.

When we become aware of young people below the age of consent engaging in sexual activity or, where we have concerns about a 16/17-year old in a sexual relationship, the Designated Teacher has a duty to share this information with Social Services.

### **6.3 Signs and symptoms of abuse**

Signs and symptoms are indicators and simply highlight the need for further investigation and assessment. The signs and symptoms of the various types of abuse are included in Appendix 2.

### **6.4 Specific types of abuse**

In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse.

**Bullying** is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in Lurgan College. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the pupil being targeted and to modify the behaviour of the pupil displaying bullying behaviour. Parents of both the pupil who is the target of bullying and the pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour will be personally contacted immediately bullying is identified. Pupils are given guidance on how to deal with bullying, including cyber bullying, through Assemblies and Personal Development lessons.

**We will take seriously any concerns which are raised about a pupil in our school who has self-harmed and/or has expressed suicidal thoughts. The Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher will immediately follow the school's child protection procedures.**

**A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.**

Information about other specific types of abuse has been included in Appendix 3.

### **6.5 Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English and sexual orientation. We have included information about children with increased vulnerabilities in our policy (Appendix 4).

## **7. Responding to Safeguarding and Child Protection Concerns**

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<sup>1</sup>.

### **7.1 How a parent can raise a concern about safeguarding/child protection**

In Lurgan College we aim to work closely with parents/carers in supporting all aspects of their child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner.

If a parent has a concern about the safety of their (or another) child they can talk to the Head of Year, House Teacher, Subject Teacher the Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Principal.

If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. If after this a parent still has concerns they can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman. At any time, a parent may talk to a Social Worker at the local Children's Services Gateway Team or to the PSNI Central Referral Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in Appendix 5.

### **7.2 Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff**

In Lurgan College if a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, they will complete a Note of Concern (Appendix 1). **They should not investigate**, as this is the responsibility of Social Services and/or the PSNI but will discuss these concerns immediately with the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher will consult with the Principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action. If the Principal is not available, the matter will be discussed with the Vice-Principal. If required, advice may be sought from an Education Authority Child Protection Service Officer. The Designated Teacher may also seek clarification from the child or their parent/carer.

The Principal, in consultation with the Designated member of staff will decide whether, in the best interest of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral.

If a child protection referral is required, the Designated Teacher will seek consent from 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (August 2017)  
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

The Designated Teacher will telephone the Social Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI referral form. Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed of the action taken.

If a child protection referral is not required the school may consider other options including monitoring, signposting or referring to other support agencies e.g. Family Support Hub with parental consent and, where appropriate, with the child/young person's consent.

This procedure is outlined in Appendix 6.

### **7.3 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff or a volunteer**

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff or a volunteer, the Principal (or Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher if he is not available) **must be informed immediately**.

If the Principal has concerns that a child may be at immediate risk from a volunteer, the services of the volunteer will be terminated immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, then the Designated Teacher (or Deputy Designated Teacher, if she is not available) will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority.

The procedures as outlined in Appendix 7 will be followed.

### **7.4 Consent**

Concerns about the safety or welfare of a child/young person, should, where practicable, be discussed with the parent and consent sought for a referral to children's social services in the local HSC Trust. This should be the normal course of action unless seeking agreement is likely to place the child/young person at further risk through delay or undermine any criminal investigative process (for example in circumstances where there are concerns or suspicions that a crime has taken place); or there is concern raised about the parent's actions or reactions. The communication/language needs of the parents/carers should be established for example in relation to disability/ethnicity and the parent's/carer's capacity to understand should be ascertained. These should be addressed through the provision of appropriate communication methods, including, where necessary, translators, signers, intermediaries or advocacy services.

Effective protection for children/young people may, on occasions, require the sharing of information without prior parental/carer consent in advance of that information being shared.

Where staff decide not to seek parental consent before making a referral to children's social services in the local Health and Social Care Trust or the police, the reason for this decision must be clearly noted in the child/young person's records and included within the verbal and written/UNOCINI referral.

When a referral is deemed to be necessary in the interests of the child/young person, and the parents/carers have been consulted and do not consent, the following action should be taken:

- The reason for proceeding without parental consent must be recorded
- The withholding of permission by the parent/carer must be included in the verbal and written referral to children's social services
- The parent/carer should be contacted to inform them that, after considering their wishes, a referral has been made.

Staff making a referral may ask for their anonymity to be protected as far as possible because of a genuine threat to self/family. In such instances this anonymity should be protected with an explanation to the staff member that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as information may become the subject of court processes.

## **8. Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Group Meetings**

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher or Principal may be invited to attend initial and review Child Protection Case Conferences and/or core group meetings convened by the Health & Social Care Trust. They will provide a written report which will be compiled following consultation with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored and supported in accordance with the child protection plan.

## **9. Confidentiality and information sharing**

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. Where abuse is suspected, schools have a legal duty to refer to the Statutory Agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

Where there have been, or are current, child protection concerns about a pupil who transfers to another school we will consider what information should be shared with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school.

Where it is necessary to safeguard children, information will be shared with other statutory agencies in accordance with the requirements of this policy, the school data protection policy and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

## **10. Record keeping**

In accordance with DE guidance we must consider and develop clear guidelines for the recording, storage, retention and destruction of both manual and electronic records where they relate to child protection concerns.

In order to meet these requirements all child protection records including Notes of Concern, UNOCINI documents, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in Lurgan College are placed in the pupil's Child Protection File and stored securely in a

locked filing cabinet. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the pupil and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher and Principal have access to them. The pupil's Educational Record is marked to indicate the presence of a separate confidential Child Protection File. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from the child's date of birth plus 30 years (see school's Disposal of Records Schedule). If information is held electronically, whether on a laptop or on a portable memory device, all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected.

These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

When Social Services inform the school that a pupil's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, this information is recorded in a Private Folder on the C2K system which has been allocated for Child Protection. The associated documentation from Social Services is stored in the pupil's Child Protection File.

When a pupil whose name is on the Child Protection Register transfers to another school, we will inform the receiving school immediately that his/her name is on the Register and pass on contact details for the Social Worker.

**All allegations** of a child abuse nature by a member of staff of the school, are recorded in the hard backed and bound Record of Child Abuse Complaints book, which is retained securely in a locked cabinet.

## **11. Safe Recruitment procedures**

Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals from gaining access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system. Schools must ensure that all persons on school property are vetted, inducted and supervised as appropriate. All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in Lurgan College are vetted/supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance (AccessNI).

## **12. Code of Conduct for all staff - Paid or Unpaid**

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the child and young people in their charge must be above reproach. All members of staff are expected to comply with the school's Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers which has been approved by the Board of Governors (Appendix 8).

## **13. Staff training**

Lurgan College is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on policy and procedures with some members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and annual refresher training. The

Principal/Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses provided by the Child Protection Support service for Schools.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and are given copies of these documents. They are also given a copy of the Child Protection/Safeguarding Leaflet and are asked to complete the accompanying *pro forma*.

#### **14. The preventative curriculum**

The statutory personal development curriculum requires schools to give specific attention to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers a medium to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours. (DENI Circular 2017/04).

Our school seeks to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's Personal Development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects.

Throughout the school year, child protection/safeguarding issues are addressed through a PowerPoint presentation on the first day of the Autumn term, an Assembly and occasional reminders during the year. Child Protection information is displayed on notice boards and screens around the school. This includes advice, helpline numbers and flow diagrams of how child protection concerns can be raised.

Through the preventative curriculum, pupils are also taught about the risks of different kinds of abuse and can be equipped with the skills they need to help them to stay safe, by recognising unwelcome approaches or behaviour and developing the confidence to resist them as far as possible.

Through the Personal Development programme, which is delivered by House Teachers and supplemented by external speakers, we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resiliencies of the pupils so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations. It also provides a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build respect and sensitivity among their peers.

The taught programme for Learning for Life and Work in Year 11 includes lessons on recognising, assessing and managing risk.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues:

- The Years 11 and 13 Induction Programmes include activities which ensure that the child protection arrangements are understood by the pupils.
- Child Protection/Safeguarding and Safe Use of Technology information are included in the Student Planner
- Assemblies and other activities are arranged during Anti-Bullying Week.

- Presentations to pupils from a range of organisations including Love for Life, Action Mental Health, MensSana, A21 (Human Trafficking), Just One Life – Driver Awareness, the Reach Team, ASCERT, Praxis, REACT, YMCA, Theresa Burke (Drugs), and the PSNI.
- The Acceptable Use of ICT Policy is distributed to Year 11 and new Year 13 pupils and both the pupils and their parents are required to sign a form as evidence of their approval and acceptance of the school rules. The safe use of the internet is addressed in Personal Development lessons, is reinforced in ICT lessons and is highlighted in lessons and assemblies during the week in which Safer Internet Day falls. In addition, Securus is used to monitor activity on C2K managed devices.
- At the beginning of each school year, parents are asked to sign a form, consenting to their child’s photograph being used for publicity purposes.
- Liaison with the Education Authority’s Pupil Personal Development and Child Protection Teams
- Access to the School Counsellor (FamilyWorks) and mentoring (Reach)
- Close monitoring of attendance including text messaging and a Subway voucher scheme
- All staff received SuicideTalk training and members of the Pastoral Care Team attended a Mental Health First Aid Course and or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- Partnership with a range of external organisations including Social Services, EWO and CAMHS

**15. Monitoring and evaluating**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Team and approved every 2 years by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. It will be implemented through the school’s staff induction and training programme and as part of day to day practice. Compliance with the policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the Designated Teacher for child protection and periodically by the School’s Safeguarding Team. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Teacher.

Date Policy Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Designated Teacher)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Board of Governors)

**Lurgan College**

**Confidential**

**NOTE OF CONCERN**

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

Name of Pupil:
Year Group:
Date, time, place 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:

Yes

No

If 'No' state reason:

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

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

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

### Signs and symptoms of abuse ~ Possible Indicators

While the following indicators can be useful in identifying potential risk, their presence does not necessarily mean the abuse is occurring. More importantly, nor does their absence mean it is not.

#### Physical abuse

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
a) Bruises and soft tissues injuries - in various stages of healing – grip marks on arms; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; slap marks; welts; lacerations; abrasions; untreated injuries b) Eye injuries – unexplained black eyes c) Burns and scalds - especially cigarette burns; d) Fractures e) Scars f) Bites - human bite marks g) Other types of physical injuries – poisoning; ingestion of other damaging substances e.g. bleach; administration of drugs to children where they are not medically prescribed; FGM unexplained neurological signs and symptoms h) Fabricated or induced illness	Self-destructive tendencies; Aggressive to other children; Behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; Improbable excuses to explain injuries; Chronic runaway; Uncomfortable with physical contact; Comes to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home; Clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories

#### Emotional abuse

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
Well below average in height and weight; 'failing to thrive'; Poor hair and skin - alopecia; Swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet; Recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; Sudden speech disorders; Signs of self-mutilation; Signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness); Extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).	Serious emotional reactions, characterised by withdrawal, anxiety, social and home fears, reluctance for parental liaison e.t.c.; Marked behavioural and conduct difficulties, e.g. attention seeking, opposition and aggression, stealing, running away, promiscuity, lying; Persistent relationship difficulties, e.g. extreme clinginess, intense separation reaction, poor peer relationships; Extremes of self-stimulatory behaviours, e.g. rocking, head banging, comfort seeking 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; Inappropriate emotional responses to painful

situations.

## **Neglect**

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
Looks very thin, poorly and sad; Constant hunger; Untreated medical problems; Frequent attendance at Accident and Emergency and/or frequent hospital admissions; Special needs of child not being met; Constant tiredness – lack of energy, depressed; Poor or inappropriate clothing for the time of year; Poor hygiene - repeatedly unwashed, smelly; Repeated accidents - especially burns.	Tired or listless (falls asleep in class); Abnormal eating behaviour - steals food, bingeing or hoarding food, begging from class friends; Withdrawn; Lacks concentration; Misses school medicals; Reports that no carer is at home; Low self-esteem; Poor attendance at school; Exposure to violence including unsuitable videos; Repeated running away from home; Substance misuse;

## **Sexual abuse**

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs; Itching, soreness, discharge or unexplained bleeding; Physical damage to genital, anal areas or mouth; Signs of sexually transmitted infections; Recurrent urinary tract infections; Difficulty in walking or sitting; Torn, stained or bloody underclothes or evidence of clothing having been removed and replaced; Psychosomatic symptoms such as recurrent abdominal pain or headache; Unexplained pregnancies where the identity of the father is vague; Avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers;	What the child tells you; Repeated running away from home; Sleep problems – insomnia, recurrent nightmares, fear of going to bed or overdressing for bed; Dependence on alcohol or drugs; Suicide attempts and self-mutilation; Hysterical behaviour, depression, withdrawal, mood swings; Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia or over-eating, leading to massive weight changes; Low self-esteem, lack of confidence, peer problems and low expectation of others; Persistent stealing and / or lying; Sudden school problems – truanting, lack of concentration, deterioration in work or behaviour; Fear or abhorrence of one particular individual; Excessive sexual precociousness, seductiveness, promiscuity; Over concerned for siblings; Unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories; Vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; Exposure to pornographic material.

## **Child Sexual Exploitation**

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
Bruises, bite marks; Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less);	Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation; Truancing/leaving school without permission; Persistently going missing or returning late; Receiving lots of texts / phone calls prior to leaving; Change in mood – agitated / stressed; Appearing distraught / dishevelled or under the influence of substances; Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age; Collected from school by unknown adults or taxis; New peer groups; Significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend; Increasing secretiveness around behaviours; Low self-esteem; Self-harm and other expressions of despair; Evidence or suspicion of substance abuse.

### Specific Types of Abuse

**Grooming** of a young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the 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.

If the staff in Lurgan College become aware of signs that may indicate grooming they will take early action and follow the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures.

**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. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017). The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible 'rewards' or 'benefits' such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging. Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. The abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis.

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 Violence and Abuse** can have a profoundly negative effect on a child's emotional, psychological and social well-being. A child does not have to witness domestic violence to be adversely affected by it. Living in a violent or abusive domestic environment is harmful to children. The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy (March 2016) defines domestic and sexual violence and abuse as follows:

- **Domestic violence and abuse** – 'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender

identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.'

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

If it comes to the attention of school staff that Domestic Abuse is, or may be, affecting a child/young person this will be passed to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team.

**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'. FGM is a complex issue with many men and women from practising communities considering it to be normal to protect their cultural identity. The procedure may be carried out when the girl is newborn, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during the first pregnancy. 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.

**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 we in Lurgan College 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 Sexualised 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 is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as 'healthy', 'problematic' or 'sexually harmful'. Healthy sexual behaviour will normally 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. 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. Alternatively, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the EA CPSS may be required. We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2016/05 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

Harmful sexualised behaviour is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when:

- There is no informed consent by the victim; and/or
- The perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim.
- Harmful sexualised behavior can include - using age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases, inappropriate touching, using sexual violence or threats.
- Sexual behavior between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not.
- However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them – e.g. if the older child is disabled.

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.

Harmful sexualised behaviour will always require intervention and in our school we will refer to our Child Protection Policy and, seek the support that is available from the CPSS.

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

In January 2014, the SBNI published its report 'An exploration of e-safety messages to young people, parents and practitioners in Northern Ireland' which identified the associated risks around online safety under four categories:

- **Content risks:** the child or young person is exposed to harmful material.
- **Contact risks:** the child or young person participates in adult initiated online activity.
- **Conduct risks:** the child or young person is a perpetrator or victim in peer-to-peer exchange.
- **Commercial risks:** the child or young person is exposed to inappropriate commercial advertising, marketing schemes or hidden costs.

We in Lurgan College 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. The school is committed to teaching pupils about online safety issues, and how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe.

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

- **Sexting between individuals in a relationship**

Pupils need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual relationship) and in these cases we will contact local police on 101 for advice and guidance. We may also seek advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service.

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 of 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 young person from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of a sexual image.

- **Sharing an inappropriate image with an intent to cause distress**

It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent. If a pupil has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that it is **not forwarded to anyone else**. Schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted](http://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.



## 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**

As with children with a special educational need, children who are not fluent in English should be given the chance 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.

Designated Teachers should work with their SEN Co-ordinators along with school staff with responsibility for Newcomer pupils, seeking advice from the EA's Intercultural Education Service to identify and respond to any particular communication needs that a child may have. All schools should try to 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.

- **Looked After Children**

In consultation with other agencies and professionals, a Health and Social Care Trust may determine that a child or young person's welfare cannot be safeguarded if they remain at home. In these circumstances, a child may be accommodated through a voluntary arrangement with the persons with parental responsibility for the child or the HSCT may make an application to the Court for a Care Order to place the child or young person in an alternative placement provided by the Trust. The HSCT will then make arrangements for the child to be looked after, either permanently or temporarily. It is important that the views of children, young people and their parents and/or others with parental responsibility for the looked after child are taken into account when decisions are made.

A member of school staff will attend LAC meetings and will provide a written report. Where necessary, school support will be put in place for the child/young person. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a need to know basis.

- **Children / young people who go missing**

Children and young people who go missing come from all backgrounds and communities and are known to be at greater risk of harm. This includes risks of being sexually abused or exploited although children and young people may also become homeless or a victim or perpetrator of crime. Those who go missing from their family home may have no involvement with services as not all children and young people who run away or go missing from their family home have underlying issues within the family or are reported to the police as missing.

The patterns of going missing may include overnight absences or those who have infrequent unauthorised absences of short time duration. When a child or young person returns, having been missing for a period, we should be alert to the possibility that they may have been harmed and to any behaviours or relationships or other indicators that children and young people may have been abused.

School staff will work in partnership with those who look after the child or young person who goes missing and, if appropriate, will complete a risk assessment. Current school policies will apply e.g. attendance, safeguarding, relationships and sexuality education.

- **Young people in supported accommodation**

Staff will work in partnership with those agencies involved with young people living in care and those living in supported accommodation and will provide pastoral support as necessary.

- **Young people who are homeless**

If we become aware that a young person in our school is homeless we will share this information with Social Services whose role is to carry out a comprehensive needs and risk assessment. We will contribute to the assessment and attend multi-disciplinary meetings.

- **Separated, unaccompanied and trafficked children and young people**

**Separated children** and young people are those who have been separated from their parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver. **Unaccompanied children** and young people are those seeking asylum without the presence of a legal guardian. Consideration must be given to the fact that separated or unaccompanied children may be a victim of human trafficking.

**Child Trafficking** is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child or young person, whether by force or not, by a third person or group, for the purpose of different types of exploitation.

If we become aware of a child or young person who may be separated, unaccompanied or a victim of human trafficking we in Lurgan College will immediately follow our safeguarding and child protection procedures

- **Children of parents with additional support needs**

Children and young people can be affected by the disability of those caring for them. Parents, carers or siblings with disabilities may have additional support needs which impact on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the family, possibly affecting their education or physical and emotional development. It is important that any action school staff take to safeguard children and young people at risk of harm in these circumstances encompasses joint working between specialist disability and children's social workers and other professionals and agencies involved in providing services to adult family members. This will assist us in ensuring the welfare of the children and young people in the family is promoted and they are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

Where it is known or suspected that parents or carers have impaired ability to care for a child, the safeguarding team will give consideration to the need for a child protection response in addition to the provision of family support and intervention.

- **Gender identity issues and sexual orientation**

Young people from the LGBTQ community may face particular difficulties which could make them more vulnerable to harm. These difficulties could range from intolerance and homophobic bullying from others to difficulties for the young person themselves in exploring and understanding their sexuality. At such times young people may be more vulnerable to predatory advances from adults seeking to exploit or abuse them. This could impede a young person's ability or willingness to raise concerns if they feel they are at risk or leave young people exposed to contact with people who would exploit them.

As a staff working with young people from the LGBT 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.

- **Boarding schools and residential settings**

Children in the above settings are particularly vulnerable to abuse. We will ensure that staff are appropriately vetted and trained in accordance with DE guidance.

- **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 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.

## **Children/young people's behaviours**

- **Peer Abuse**

Children and young people may be at risk of physical, sexual and emotional bullying and abuse by their peers. Such abuse should always be taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. Where a child or young person has been harmed by another, all school staff should be aware of their responsibilities in relation to both children and young people who perpetrate the abuse as well as those who are victims of it and, where necessary, should contribute to an inter-disciplinary and multi-agency response.

- **Self-Harm**

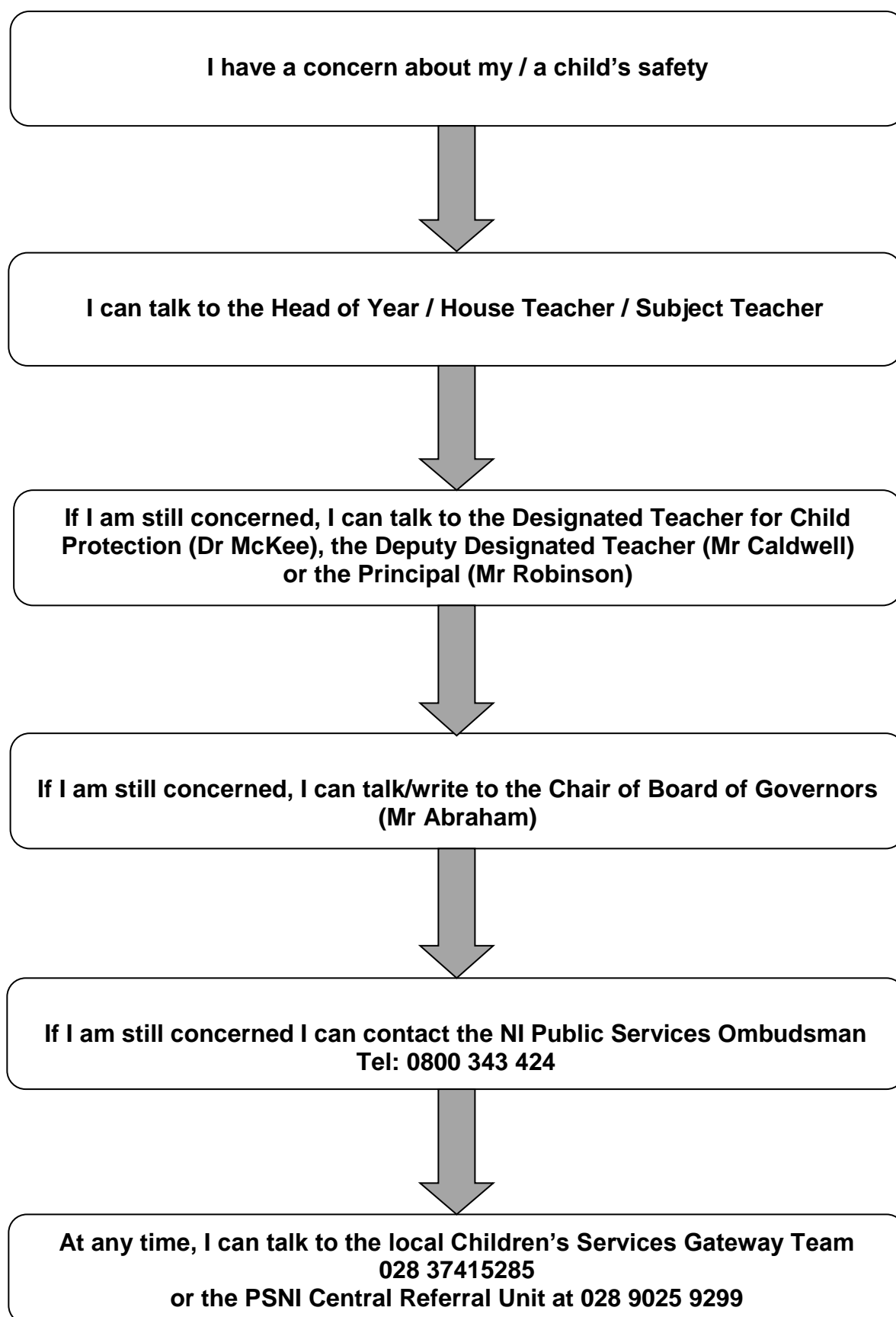
Self-harm encompasses a wide range of behaviours and things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way, which are damaging. It may indicate a temporary period of emotional pain or distress, or deeper mental health issues which may result in the development of a progressive pattern of worsening self-harm that may ultimately result in death by misadventure or suicide. Self-harm may involve abuse of substances such as alcohol or drugs, including both illegal and/or prescribed drugs.

Self-harming behaviours may indicate that a child or young person has suffered abuse; but this is not always the case. School staff should share concerns about a child or young person who is self-harming with a member of the Safeguarding Team who will seek advice from appropriately qualified and experienced professionals including those in the non-statutory sector to make informed assessments of risk in relation to self-harming behaviours.

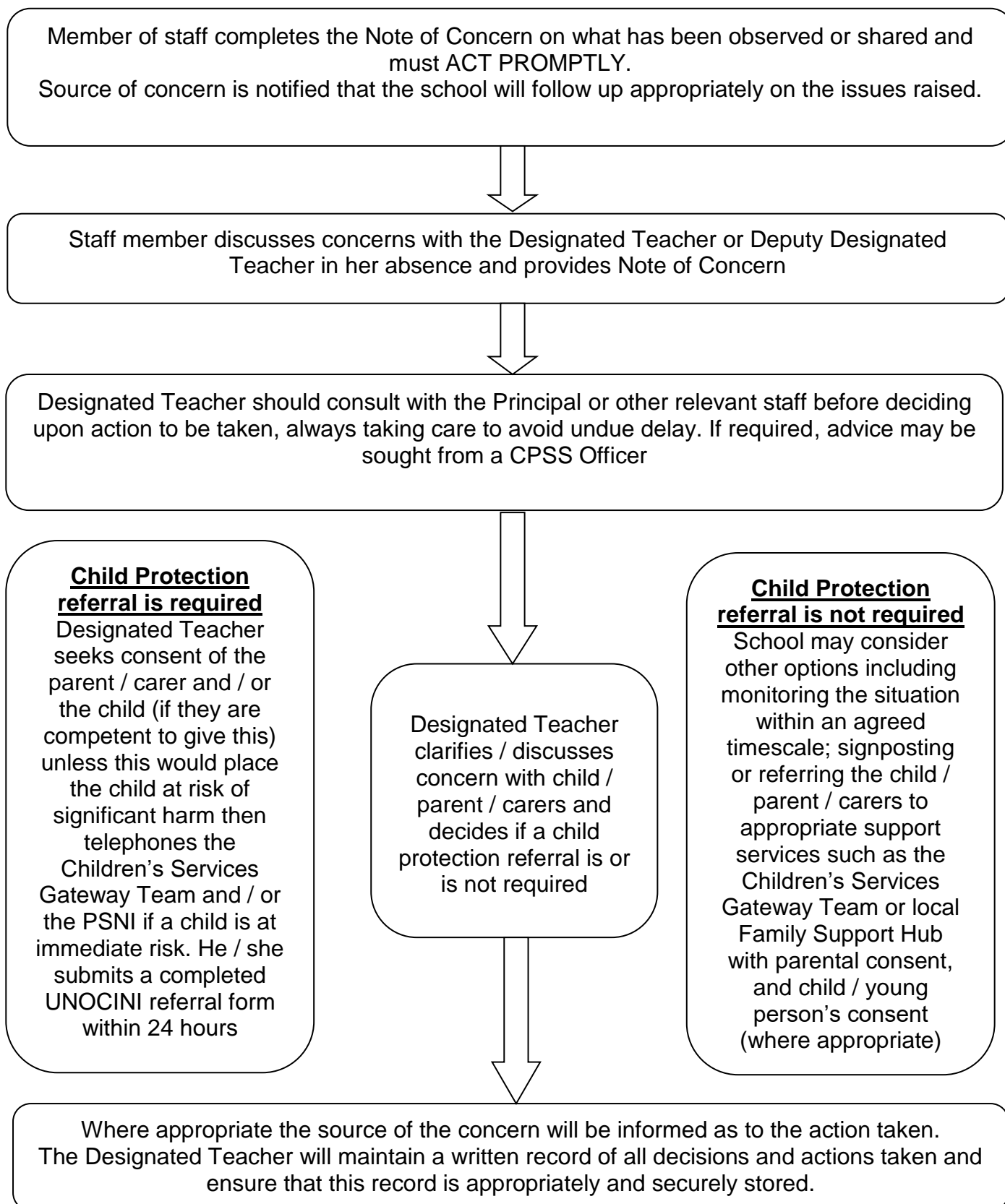
- **Suicidal Ideation**

Staff must act without delay if they have concerns about a child or young person who presents as being suicidal as it is important that children and young people who communicate thoughts of suicide or engage in para-suicidal behaviours are seen urgently by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, including those in the non-statutory sector, to ensure they are taken seriously, treated with empathy, kindness and understanding and informed assessments of risk and needs can be completed as a matter of priority.

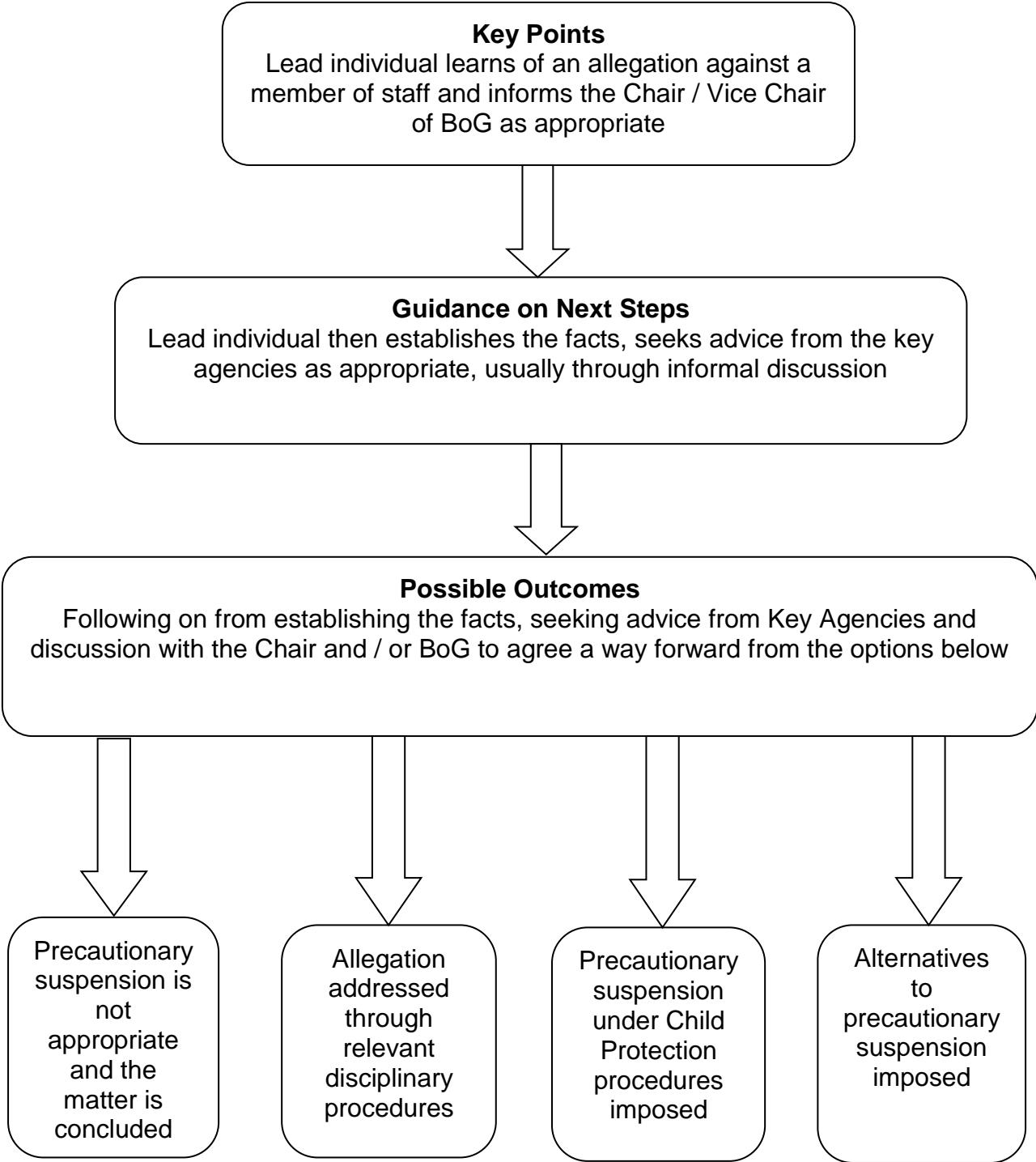
## Procedure where a parent has a potential child protection concern



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



Dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff



## Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers

This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences young people gain from positive interaction with staff within school. Rather, it is intended to assist staff by drawing attention to areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on conduct. It is anticipated that adherence to the Code will reduce the risk of allegations being made.

### 1. Private Meetings with Pupils

- (a) Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- (b) Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another member of staff knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- (c) Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another member of staff should be present or nearby during the interview.

### 2. Physical Contact with Pupils

- (a) As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with pupils.
- (b) It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- (c) Some teachers are likely to come into physical contact with their pupils from time to time in the course of their teaching, e.g. when showing a pupil how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment or while demonstrating a move or exercise during games or PE. Teachers should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted by the pupil.
- (d) Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- (e) Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- (f) The use of certain areas like the photographic darkroom, should always be by a minimum of three persons.
- (g) Staff who have to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*
- (h) Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.



- (i) Following an incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a verbal report should be submitted immediately to the Designated Teacher or if she is unavailable, another member of the Safeguarding Team. A written report of the incident will be required within a timescale agreed with the Designated Teacher. The report should detail:
  - Date and time of incident
  - Location of the incident
  - Nature of the incident
  - Names of any witnesses
- (j) Staff should be particularly careful when supervising in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.
- (k) In extreme cases, a staff member may use reasonable force to restrain for the purposes of preventing the pupil from:
  - committing an offence;
  - causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself); or
  - engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether that behaviour occurs during a teaching session or otherwise.

Staff are empowered to use reasonable force in these circumstances, either on school premises or anywhere else where the member of staff is in lawful charge of the pupils concerned. In such circumstances no more than the minimum necessary force should be used. Staff should act within the Department's and the Education Authority's guidelines on the use of reasonable force and should seek to avoid causing injury to the pupil.

### **3. Choice and use of teaching materials**

- (a) Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- (b) When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature, a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might be criticised after the event.
- (c) If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

### **4. Relationships and attitudes**

Within the Pastoral Care Policies of the school and the employing authority, staff should always maintain professional boundaries and should not attempt to establish inappropriate relationships. They should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and gender of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

Staff should be particularly alert to the dangers of socialising outside school with the pupils under their care.

## 5. Use of social media and mobile phones

Staff should not make contact with pupils using electronic means of communication such as personal emails, by text on their personal phones or through social media sites.

The school recognises the benefits of using technology, including social networking, in an educational context. When doing so it should be clear that that teacher is communicating in a professional rather than a personal context. For example, school email accounts should be used and any social networking profile should be based on a subject department or professional role. It should also be made clear to users that any comments made, while professional, are not necessarily those of the school authorities.

What you can do to protect yourself:

- Keep personal mobile phone numbers private; do not use your own mobile phone to contact pupils and parents. If there is a need to contact pupils during weekly activities such as sporting events or on less regular occasions such as a school trip, for example, you should use a school mobile phone.
- Do not give out personal e-mail addresses to pupils and parents. If pupils do need to contact you with regard to assignments or exams, always use your school e-mail address. Pupils should be encouraged to use their school email address when contacting a member of staff.
- If you use social networking sites, avoid 'friending' pupils, recent pupils or parents or adding them to your contact lists. Always restrict access to your personal Internet accounts, set appropriate privacy levels and keep passwords secret. Think carefully before making any posts, status updates or having discussions regarding the school, its staff, pupils or parents in an online environment – even if your account is private. Do not post information about yourself publicly that you would not want employers, colleagues, pupils or parents to see. Anything that is put online is potentially public and permanent.
- A school camera should be used for taking photographs of pupils on trips and in the classroom. You should not take or store photographs of pupils on your personal camera or phone. Also, before using any images, check with the school policy about the taking and sharing of photographs. In particular, before using photographs of pupils for publicity purposes ensure that their parents have signed a consent form.
- If you are the victim of cyber bullying, for example, a pupil makes inappropriate comments or posts images of you or another member of staff, do not retaliate, but save/print all available evidence. Report the incident to a member of the Safeguarding Team. You should also make a report to the service provider; this could be your mobile phone operator, or the social networking service on which the abuse is taking place.

These measures are designed to safeguard staff from allegations.

### Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff inter-relate with pupils, or where opportunities for their conduct may be misconstrued.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement should be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their safe practice. If employees have any doubts about points in this policy, or how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult their Designated Teacher.

Members of staff should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse, such as persistent and vindictive sarcasm, verbal bullying, or severe and persistent negative comment or actions, particularly when directed consistently at a single child or a small number of children in a class.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with pupils and their manner and approach to individual pupils, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of pupils or of their parents/guardians.