

SUMMARY

PASTORAL CARE: CHILD PROTECTION POLICY (INCLUDING BULLYING)

1. Child Protection Ethos

We in Lurgan College have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care, and 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. One way in which we seek to protect our pupils is by helping them to learn about the risks of possible abuse, assisting them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and facilitating them to acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

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 neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school.

2. Principles

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy.

- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- In any incident the child's welfare must be paramount, this overrides all other considerations.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interests must always come first.

3. The 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 R. Uprichard
- Chair of the Board of Governors – Mr S. Abraham
- Designated Governor – Mrs S. Matthews
- Deputy Designated Governor – Mrs G. Cuthbert

4. What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child.

Types of Abuse:

Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of the other person. It may involve causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

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

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a child or young person is exploited, coerced and/or manipulated into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something they need or desire and/or for the gain of a third person.

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.

Domestic Violence

It is now recognised that children who live in an atmosphere of domestic violence may be at risk. Domestic violence is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

If it comes to the attention of school staff that domestic abuse is or may be a factor for a child/young person this must be passed to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with Social Services

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 abuse 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.

5. Bullying

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff are asked to be vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both victim and bully will be personally contacted immediately bullying behaviour is identified.

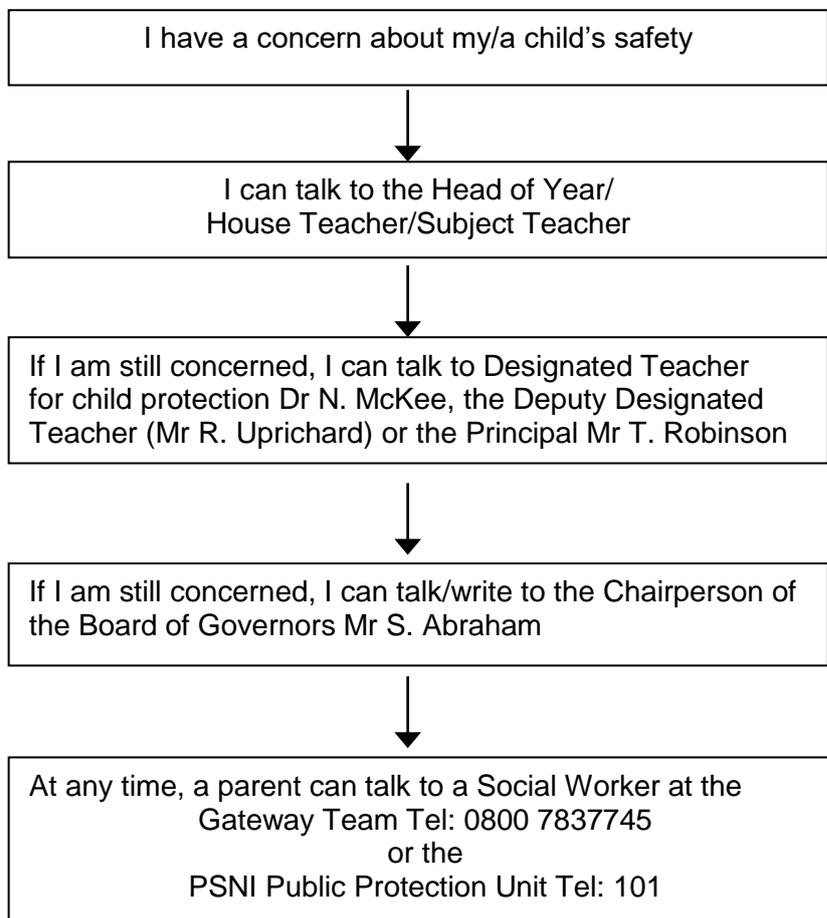
Any complaint by a parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied will be fully investigated by the Designated Teacher for child protection, and action will be taken to protect the victim. This will usually include ensuring that another child or small group of children befriends and supports the child being bullied during the school day. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the Designated Teacher within one week of making the complaint, indicating the investigation which has been carried out and the action being taken.

The sanction taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of any privileges or position of responsibility he/she holds in the school. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped.

If a pupil's bullying behaviour persists, the second stage will be to instigate child protection procedures.

6. How a parent can make a complaint about possible child abuse

At Lurgan College we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. The flow chart below shows the arrangements for parents to make known to the school any concerns they may have about the safety of their child or another pupil.



7. Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff including volunteers

Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a child about possible abuse they should not investigate – this is a matter for Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher and make full notes.

The Designated Teacher, in consultation with the Principal, will decide whether in the best interests 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. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately.

The Designated Teacher may consult with the Education Authority's (EA) Designated Officer for Child Protection or Social Services Gateway Team before a referral is made. During consultation with the Designated Officer the child's details will be shared. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our prime priority.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made, the Designated Teacher will telephone Social Services Gateway Team and will also notify the EA Designated Officer for Child Protection. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be

completed and forwarded to the Gateway team with a copy sent to the EA Designated Officer for Child Protection.

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.

8. Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the Designated Teacher, if he is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal/Designated Teacher).

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Designated Teacher (or her deputy, if she is not available) will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

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.

10. Vetting Procedures and Code of Conduct

All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in Lurgan College are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

11. Staff Code of Conduct

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 staff have adopted a Code of Conduct for their behaviour towards pupils.

The full Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy and Procedures can be requested from the school or can be found on the website in the Pastoral Care, Child Protection section.