

SUMMARY

PASTORAL CARE: CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING 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 is 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 G. Caldwell
- Chair of the Board of Governors – Mr S. Abraham
- Designated Governor – Mrs G. Cuthbert
- Deputy Designated Governor – Mr P. Maxwell

4. 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. 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. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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. 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, 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.

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.

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 pupil who is the target of bullying behaviour and to support the pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour of the bully. 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 behaviour is identified.

Any complaint by a parent that their child is, or may be, the target of bullying behaviour will be fully investigated by the Designated Teacher for child protection, and action will be taken to protect the pupil. This will usually include ensuring that another pupil or small group of pupils befriends and supports the pupil

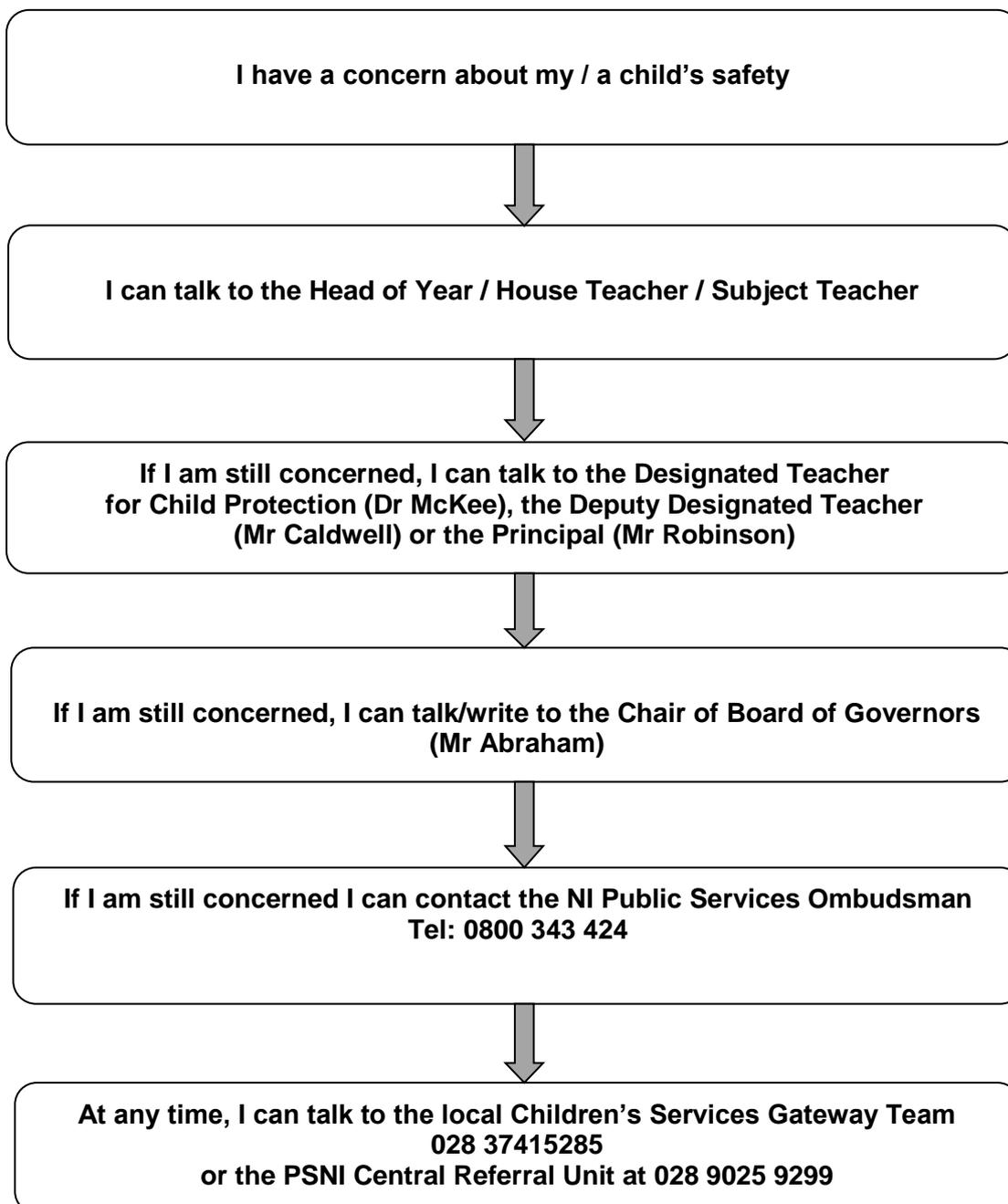
who is the target of bullying during the school day. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the Designated Teacher within one week of making the complaint, indicating the investigation which has been carried out and the action being taken.

The sanction taken against a pupil who displays bullying behaviour will depend on the seriousness of the case but will include the loss of any privileges or positions 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 persists in displaying bullying behaviour, the second stage will be to instigate child protection procedures.

6. 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. 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

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 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 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.

The Designated Teacher will telephone the Social Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) 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.

8. 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 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.

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.

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.

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. 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).

11. 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.

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.