

# **CARRICKFERGUS MODEL SCHOOL**



## **Policy for Child Protection and Safe-Guarding**

**Reviewed September 2025**

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## **Carrickfergus Model School – Child Protection and Safe-Guarding Policy**

*“In recognition of the key role that a school plays in the life of a child, schools have a safeguarding responsibility towards the children and young people in their charge...Safeguarding is more than child protection. Safeguarding begins with preventative education and activities which enable children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is promoted. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection, which refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or likely to suffer harm.”*

**In all matters relating to safeguarding and child protection procedures or policies, the best interest of the child must be the paramount consideration.**

*Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A guide for schools: DENI (updated September 2024)*

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

### **Key Principals of Safeguarding and Child Protection**

1. The child or young person’s welfare is paramount
2. The voice of the child or young person should be heard
3. Parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped to stay together
4. Partnership
5. Prevention
6. Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances
7. Protection
8. Evidence-based and informed decision making

At Carrickfergus Model Primary School, all staff have a safeguarding responsibility towards all pupils in their charge and should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved. In addition, all staff should demonstrate and live out the ethos, vision and aims of the school.

## **Adult Safeguarding**

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

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

We are committed to:

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

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

### **Policy Aims**

- To outline the school's safeguarding / child protection ethos
- To outline the safe recruitment measures used
- To outline the definitions and potential signs and symptoms of abuse, including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and domestic violence
- To outline the roles of the DT and DDTs (Child Protection Team) and appropriate contact details for them
- To outline the reporting measures for concerns about school staff or volunteers
  
- To outline how a parent can raise a concern about safeguarding / child protection
- To make reference to the School's Code of Conduct for all staff and volunteers
- To outline the school's approach to the 'Preventative Curriculum'
- To refer to other safeguarding policies
- To outline protocols for record keeping within school

### **Rationale**

At the Model Primary School we want all pupils;

- To be 'Caring, Mannerly, Prepared and Safe;'
- To feel safe and secure in their environment;
- To believe that they have a voice in their environment;
- To know how to access the help that they need;
- To have opportunities for class and group discussion of thoughts and feelings in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance;
- To develop a positive self-image;
- To develop positive relationships at all levels; and

- To be able to make well informed decisions and choices in order to protect themselves from harm or danger.

## **1. Child Protection & Safe-Guarding: The Legal Context**

There is a broad range of international and domestic legislation relating to child welfare and protection.

### **CHILD PROTECTION – THE LEGAL CONTEXT & GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

- The Criminal Law Act (NI)1967
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order 1998
- The Education (NI) Order 1998
- Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Education and Libraries Order 2003 – Welfare and Protection
- Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003
- Regional Policy Framework on the use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) order 2007
- The Sexual Offences Order 2008
- Safeguarding Board NI 2011
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- SENDO Legislation
- The Children’s Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015
- The Public Services Ombudsman Act (NI) 2016
- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016
- Interim Guidance on the Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Educational Setting 2021
- Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021
- Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
- The Domestic Abuse Information-sharing etc Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022
- Children and Young People’s Strategy 2020-2030
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (August 2017)
- Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2013-2020 and subsequent action plans
- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership

## **2. Key Roles & Responsibilities**

**The Board of Governors** – The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 places a statutory duty on the BOG to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils.
- Have a written child protection policy.
- Specifically address the prevention of bullying in school behaviour policies.

All Governors will receive an element of safeguarding training as part of their induction with the Chair and Designated Governor for Child Protection undertaking full CPSS training.

BoG must ensure that:

- A designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- A DT and DDT are appointed in their schools.
- They have a full understanding of the roles of DT and DDTs for Child Protection.
- Safeguarding and child protection training is given to all staff and governors including refresher training.
- Relevant safeguarding information guidance is disseminated to all staff and governors with the opportunity to discuss requirements and impact on roles and responsibilities.
- The School has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every two years.
- The School has an Anti-Bullying Policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than 4 years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying.
- The school ensures other safeguarding policies are reviewed at least every three years.
- There is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school.
- All school staff and volunteers are vetted.
- They receive a full annual report on all child protection matters. This report should include details of the preventive 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 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools:
  - Safeguarding and child protection concerns
  - Disclosures of Abuse
  - Allegations Made Against staff and actions taken to investigate and deal with outcomes
  - Staff induction and training

Child Protection Training for Governors has three specific elements:

- Initial child protection awareness as part of the induction programme
- Child Protection training from the CPSS for Chairperson and Designated Governor every four years

- Training on recruitment, selection and vetting which incorporates child protection legislation and DE guidance for governors who will be sitting on interview or teacher appointments panels.

## **The Safe-guarding Team**

At Carrickfergus Model, the Safe-guarding Team consists of the following staff:

1. Chairperson of the BoG: Mrs Vicky Watson  
c/o Carrickfergus Model Primary School, 4 Belfast Road, BT38 8BU
2. Designated Governor for Child Protection: Mrs Nicola Curry  
c/o Carrickfergus Model Primary School, 4 Belfast Road, BT38 8BU
3. Principal & Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mrs Jennifer Miller  
(jmiller498@c2kni.net)
4. Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DT): Mr David Caldwell  
(dcaldwell883@c2kni.net)
5. Vice-Principal / SENCO / Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mrs Julie Kirkland  
(jkirkland601@c2kni.net)

The safeguarding team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the school. The team should:

- Monitor and review the Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements in the school
- Support the DT in the exercise of their Child Protection responsibilities, including recognition of the administrative and emotional demands of the post.
- Ensuring of Governors and staff at relevant training – including refresher training – in keeping with legislative and best practice requirements.

From time to time the UICT Co-ordinators will join the Safeguarding team if a matter is to do with E-safety or similar.

## **The Chairperson**

The chairperson of the Board of Governors plays a pivotal role in creating and maintaining the safeguarding ethos within the school environment.

In the event of a safeguarding and child protection complaint being made against the Principal, it is the Chairperson who must assume lead responsibility for managing the complaint/allegation in keeping with guidance issued by DENI, employing authorities and the school's own policies and procedures.

The Chairperson is also responsible for ensuring child protection records are kept and for signing and dating the Record of Child Abuse Complaints annually, even if there have been no entries.

## **Designated Governor for Child Protection**

The Board of Governors will delegate a specific member of the governing body to 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 Teachers Report
- Recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff

## **The Principal**

The Principal will;

- Assist Board of Governors to fulfil its Safe-Guarding and Child Protection duties, keeping them informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to Safe-Guarding and Child Protection, ensuring any circulars and guidance from the Department of Education is shared promptly, and termly inclusion of Child Protection activities on the Board of Governors meeting agenda. In addition, the Principal takes the lead in managing Child Protection concerns relating to staff.
- Ensure that parents and staff receive a copy, or summary of the Child Protection policy at intake and at a minimum every 2 years.

## **The Designated Teacher for Child Protection & Safe-Guarding**

The DT will:

- Ensure the induction and training of all school staff including support staff (before they commence their role).
- Be available to discuss safe-guarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff.
- Have responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns.
- Ensure staff are aware that notes of concern are completed using the school template.
- To maintain a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services eg Family Support Hubs.
- To make referrals to social services or PSNI, where appropriate.
- To liaise with the EA designated Officers for Child Protection.
- To keep the Principal informed.
- Take lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy.
- To exercise professional judgement and confidentiality on complex and emotive issues.
- To keep up to date with relevant legislation and Education Authority/Department of Education guidance.
- To report to Board of Governors on Safe-Guarding and Child Protection matters.

- To report to ETI on Safe-Guarding and Child Protection matters in school.
- To have responsibility for secure record keeping of all Child Protection concerns.
- To compile regular written reports on Child Protection for the Board of Governors.
- To contribute to the Board of Governors Annual Report.
- Ensure Primary parents receive copy of the policy as part of the Primary 1 Induction package.
- Notify the Chair of Board of Governors if there is a complaint against the Principal; to ensure the induction and training of all school staff, teaching and non-teaching as Designated Teacher for Safe-Guarding and Child Protection every 2 years.
- Promote a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school.
- To lead staff meetings / key stage meetings, where appropriate.
- To build capacity in our staff through support, guidance, direction, coaching, mentoring, example and continuing professional development opportunities.

### **Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection & Safe-Guarding**

The role of the DDT is to work co-operatively with the Designated Teacher in fulfilling his responsibilities.

It is important that the Deputy Designated Teachers work in partnership with the Designated Teacher so that they develop sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher when required. Deputy Designated Teachers are also provided with the same specialist training by CPSS to help them in their role.

Schools may have more than one Deputy Designated Teacher. At Carrickfergus Model, we have the Safeguarding Team.

All new DTs and DDTs should attend the two-day CPSS Introduction to Child Protection course, at the earliest opportunity in the term in which they are appointed to the post, and refresher training within three years of their initial training date and thereafter.

The DT and DDT are expected to cascade child protection training to the whole school, at a minimum of every two years, with new staff receiving training as part of their induction programme.

### **School staff, teaching and non-teaching**

All school staff have important roles and responsibilities in relation to the effective implementation of our Child Protection & Safe-Guarding arrangements. The school plays a huge part in teaching children how to keep safe and how to become responsible, caring and confident. At the Model Primary School we encourage children to look after one another and protect more vulnerable members of the school community.

The teachers in the Model Primary School have specific training, knowledge and experience in all aspects of child development. They should be able to detect changes in a child's behaviour over time or to observe a child's failure to thrive.

Non-teaching staff also have a responsibility to keep children safe in all areas of the school. More importantly, children will often confide in non-teaching staff as playtimes can be a less threatening time to make disclosures to adults.

All staff should know how to identify the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and be aware of the relevant child protection procedures, including how to contact the designated teacher.

Adherence to the Staff Code of conduct is expected by all staff. The Code of conduct includes:

- Setting an example,
- Relationships and attitudes,
- Private meetings with pupils,
- Physical contact with pupils,
- Honesty and integrity,
- Conduct outside of work,
- E-safety and internet use, and
- Confidentiality

The code cannot address every possible circumstance in which staff might find themselves, however, it is intended that staff will be mindful of the Code which will raise awareness of issues and situations which can potentially arise. In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will 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.

### **Recruitment and Vetting of Staff and Volunteers**

Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals' access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system. It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors to ensure that there is an official record kept of when vetting checks are successfully completed for all staff.

Access NI Clearance is required for all staff and an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate should be obtained.

Volunteers should be supervised.

### **Visitors to School**

Visitors to our school, such as parents, suppliers of goods and services, to carry out maintenance etc. do not routinely need to be vetted before being allowed onto school premises. However, such visitors should be managed by school staff and their access to areas and movement within the school should be restricted as needs require. Visitors should be:

- Met / directed by school staff / representatives
- Signed in and out of the school, by school staff

- Given restricted access to only specific areas of the school, if appropriate
- Escorted by a member of staff / representative, where appropriate
- Clearly identified with visitor / contractor passes
- Given access to pupils restricted to the purpose of their visit
- Cordoned off from pupils for health and safety reasons if delivering goods or carrying out building / maintenance or repairs

### **Pupils on Work experience**

Pupils coming into the school on work experience do not require Access NI Clearance as they are required to be fully supervised by school staff.

### **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.”*

*(Safeguarding and Child Protection in schools: DENI: 2017)*

At intake, parents should receive at least a summary of:

- Child Protection Policy (issued every 2 years)
- Pastoral Care
- Anti-Bullying
- Positive behaviour
- E-safety
- Complaints

Parents must inform the school if:

- Their child has a medical condition or educational need
- There are any court orders relating the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child
- If there is any change in a child’s circumstances
- Changes to who brings their child to and from school
- Their child is absent
- It is essential that the school has up to date contact details for the parent/carer

If a parent has a potential child protection concern they should consult the flowchart included with this policy. The flowchart is also signposted internally in the school reception.

### **Child Protection Support Service**

The CPSS is a regional service for schools, based within the EAs Directorate of Children and Young People’s Services.

The CPSS primary role is to provide:

- A daily helpline to advise, guide and support DTS/DDTs/Principals in relation to concerns about individual children with safeguarding/child protection matters.
- Initial, refresher and cluster group training on child protection issues.
- Support visits to schools where required.
- Advice and guidance on assessing and managing children who pose a significant risk of harm to themselves, other pupils and staff.
- Dissemination of new information on training, DE circulars and guidance.
- Support in developing or reviewing the school's child protection policy.
- Follow-up to ETI inspections where child protection or safeguarding is identified as an area for improvement.

Other roles of the CPSS are contained within the Safeguarding and Child Protection Schools document by DENI.

### **Safer Schools Northern Ireland App (Safer Schools NI)**

DE currently fund iNEQE Safeguarding Group to provide the Safer Schools Northern Ireland app to schools in Northern Ireland. This app provides safeguarding and child protection support for school staff, and includes functionality that can be adapted to individual school needs, including connecting them to their wider school community.

### **Operation Encompass**

Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between the police and educational settings that focuses on the routine sharing of information relating to domestic violence or abuse in line with the Domestic Abuse Information-Sharing with Schools etc. Police will contact the school's education setting as early as possible to share information with the school's designated teacher.

Designated teachers will have to make their own professional judgement on how best to respond to the information they receive. This will depend on:

- The severity of the incident
- The type of information shared by the Police
- The age and stage of development of the child
- Any previous history known to the designated teacher

### **3. Whole School Arrangements / 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 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 to develop appropriate protective behaviours.”*

*(Safeguarding and Child Protection in schools: DENI)*

The Model is committed to raise awareness of social, emotional, and health issues, developing the confidence, resiliencies and coping skills of pupils, and offering early intervention when pupils are experiencing certain difficulties.

The personal development curriculum and wellbeing of pupils has a high priority in the School Development Plan and keeping safe messages are embedded throughout school life.

The following arrangements are the practical workings of the policy. This is not an exhaustive list as many other school policies also contain practical day to day arrangements for the protection of our children.

- A main school noticeboard features photographs of all school staff
- All teaching and non-teaching staff have lanyards
- A staff room noticeboard contains policy documents and reminders for all school staff
- Posters around the school alert children to who they can speak to if they're worried about something
- All classrooms have a system for reporting worries to their class teacher
- The School Council can also report concerns to the Principal during School Council Meetings
- Clear arrangements are made for the arrival and pick-up of children
- A buzzer system works throughout the school so the site is secure
- Staff and anyone working with the children have been vetted by Access NI
- Risk Assessments are carried out when necessary
- Permission is sought from parents regarding the publication of photographs of their child
- A thorough Primary 1 induction pack is supplied for each parent
- Children are taught how to use the internet safely

### Preventative Curriculum

Our Preventative Curriculum is school covers all aspects of keeping children safe and teaching children how to keep themselves safe:

- Clear values and school rules
- Structures and routines suited to ages and stages of pupils
- RSE is covered within the 'Personal Development and Mutual Understanding' (PDMU) area of learning
- Anti-Bullying Week is celebrated each year
- Random Acts of Kindness Day is celebrated each year
- Children's mental Health Week is celebrated each year
- Firework safety is taught at Halloween
- The NSPCC programme is taught in Assembly alongside the PANTS programme in the Foundation Stage
- Stranger danger is taught in the Foundation Stage
- Road Safety is taught in Assemblies
- Sun safety is taught in the Summer term
- Fire Safety is taught in Primary 5
- Drugs, Alcohol Misuse is taught in upper Key Stage 2

- Online safety is taught throughout the whole school with more detailed lessons taking place in upper key stage 2. The E-safety policy should be referred to.

#### **4. What is Child Abuse?**

*A child in need of protection is a child who is at risk of, or likely to suffer significant harm which can be attributed to a person or persons or organisation, either by an act of commission or omission; or a child who has suffered or is suffering significant harm. 'Harm' means ill treatment or the impairment of health or development, and the question of whether harm is significant is determined in accordance with Article 50(3) of the children order.*

*(Safeguarding and Child Protection in schools: DENI)*

#### **5. Procedures for Dealing with Suspected Child Abuse**

It is the policy of Carrickfergus Model School to act positively and decisively in the interests of any child over which there may be reasonable concerns related to physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. The staff and governors of the school have agreed a number of steps to be taken and are aware that within the process, anonymity is not guaranteed and it could be necessary to provide evidence openly in the face of parental hostility.

*'The relationships which teachers, other education professionals and other staff in the education service have with the children in their charge is based on trust, and often confidentiality. Such relationships are an integral feature of a secure, caring environment which fosters learning and personal development. Staff have, however, a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly the investigative agencies and, where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, a legal duty to report this. All staff should recognise, therefore, that, in order to protect children from harm, cases may arise where confidentiality must be subordinated to the need to take appropriate action, by informing and involving others, in the child's best interest.'*

*(Pastoral Care in schools: Child Protection: DENI: Page 11)*

#### **6. Signs and Symptoms of Abuse**

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

Observations of signs and symptoms of possible abuse can do no more than give rise to concern – they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. It must always be remembered that alternative medical, psychological or social explanations may exist for the signs and symptoms of possible abuse. However, teachers and other staff should be aware of the possible implications of, and alert to, all such signs, particularly if they appear in combination or are repeatedly regularly.

There is a range of circumstances that would invoke Child Protection/Safe-Guarding Procedures;

- A child makes a disclosure to a member of staff
- A member of staff has concerns about a child either as a result of one observation or many observations over a period of time
- A parent expresses concern about the safety of his/her child
- Other sources of information eg Social Services/EWO/PSNI etc

## 6. Types of Abuse

- **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 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 inside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- **Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making 'fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones.
- **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, transportations, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

These types of abuse apply equally to children with disabilities but the abuse may take slightly different forms, for example, lack of appropriate supervision, or the use of physical restraints such as being confined to a wheelchair or bed.

## **7. Specific Types of Abuse**

- **Grooming**
- **Child Sexual Exploitation**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Domestic Abuse**
- **Female Genital Mutilation**
- **Forced Marriage**
- **Children who display harmful sexual behaviour**
- **Harmful Sexual Behaviour**
- **Sextortion**
- **Sexting**

Referral should be made to the training notes made available by the Principal and DT which outlines more signs of abuse.

## **8. Vulnerable Groups**

*“Children and young people with disabilities may be more vulnerable to abuse and individuals and organisations 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.”*

*(Safeguarding and Child Protection in school: DENI)*

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 skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred.

The following groups of children may be at particular risk:

- Children who have a disability
- Children with limited fluency in English
- Very young children with limited communication skills due to their age
- Gender Identity Issues / Sexual Orientation
- Children whose parents have mental health problems
- Children who have experienced bullying type behaviours
- Children who have displayed bullying type behaviours

## **9. Talking to children where there are concerns about possible abuse**

Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the school's support staff sees signs, he/she should immediately bring them to the attention of either the class teacher or the DT, and it may be appropriate for the necessary clarification to be carried out by the teacher. However, care should be taken:

- Staff should not ask the child leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind.
- Staff should not, therefore, ask questions which impose the adult's own assumptions. For example, staff should say, 'Can you tell me what has happened,' rather than, 'Did they do x to you?' When, where, who questions are appropriate.
- The priority at this stage is to actively listen to the child, and not to interrupt or try to interpret if he/she is freely recalling significant events (the child must not be asked to unnecessarily recount the experience of abuse) and as soon as possible afterwards to make a record of the discussion. This should be passed to the DT with a note of the time, date, place and people who were present, as well as what was said. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail but under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed or a photograph taken.
- Any comment by the child, or subsequently by a parent or carer or other adult, about how an injury occurred should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, quoting words actually used.
- Staff should not give the child or young person undertakings or confidentiality, although they can and should, of course, reassure that information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know.
- Staff should also be aware that their note of the discussion may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings. Subsequent sections of this booklet give guidance on record-keeping. It should be emphasized that lack of proper records will not, of itself, exempt the school from any subsequent requirement to give evidence in court.
- Staff should NOT ask the child to write an account of their disclosure that could be shown to all staff.

Please refer to the Receive, Reassure, Respond, Report and Record flowchart included with this policy.

## **10. Child displaying symptoms of, or school alerted to, possible abuse**

In all cases, the staff member should report these concerns to the DT. In order to form a view on whether a child or children may indeed be being abused, or at risk of possible abuse, the Principal / DT / DDT may need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information, or from others who may have relevant information.

It is not the responsibility of staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers.

## **11. Dealing with Allegations of Abuse made Against a Member of Staff**

Where a complaint about possible abuse is made against a member of staff, the procedures in Circular 2015/13 should be followed. We will also refer to page 33 in the DENI Guide Safeguarding in Schools. In all decisions, the child's welfare is the paramount consideration and the child should be listened to and his/her concerns taken seriously. The possible risk of harm to children posed by a member of staff must be evaluated and managed and in some cases this will require consideration of suspension as a precautionary measure.

As employers, Principals and Board of Governors have a duty of care to their staff and should ensure they provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation of abuse. In the interests of all involved the issue should be dealt with as a priority and unnecessary delays should be avoided.

All allegations of a child abuse nature **must** be recorded in the hard backed and bound record of child abuse complaints book, which must be retained securely. A record of this should be placed on the relevant pupil's Child Protection file.

## **12. Process for Referral**

Responsibility for referral of suspected abuse cases lies with the DT who will find it helpful to establish a good working relationship with colleagues from the other agencies, especially social services and the PSNI.

UNOCINI is a framework to support professionals in assessment and planning to better meet the needs of children and their family.

The supporting document, 'Thresholds of Need Model' was developed to assist staff to describe the different levels of children's needs. Children's needs are categorised into four levels and assessments of need can take place both within each level and also across different needs.

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

Prior to making a referral to Social Services the consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation. If consent is not given, a referral should be made and a record maintained of the reasons given.

Non-urgent referrals **MUST** have the consent of the parent/carers and should be made in writing using the UNOCINI referral form.

Schools are reminded that, when completing a UNOCINI referral, not to copy the referral form to the EA or CCMS.

### **13. Record Keeping 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. 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 follow DE guidance in determining 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)

In accordance with DE guidance, we have developed 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, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in the Model are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teachers and Principal have access to them. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from child’s date of birth plus 30 years.

If information is held electronically, whether on a PC, 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.

If a pupil from our school attends an EOTAS provision, a member of the safeguarding team will share any child protection concerns they have with the DT in the centre. If child protection concerns arise when the pupil is attending an EOTAS provision the designated teacher in EOTAS will follow child protection procedures and will advise a member of the school’s safeguarding team of the concerns and any actions taken. It is the responsibility of EOTAS staff to maintain their records in accordance with DE Circular 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools and any subsequent updates.

Each school has a responsibility to maintain its records and record keeping systems. GDPR provides a legal framework for keeping everyone’s personal data safe by requiring organisations to have robust processes in place for handling and storing personal information based on the following principles.

- Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner;
- Collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes;
- Adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary;
- Accurate and where necessary kept up to date;

- Kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which those data are processed; and
- Processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of personal data.

The school should ensure that:

- School staff are aware of the need to record and report child protection issues and the appropriate procedures to be followed confidentially.
- Child Protection files are held in a separate, secure confidential filing system. This is only accessible by the Principal, DT and DDT.
- Files are not removed from the school premises except when taken to a case conference or to court.
- Electronic information is password protected.

#### **14. Other Safeguarding Policies:**

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Addressing Bullying Policy
- Safe Handling Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Safe Handling / Use of reasonable force Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- RSE Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Attendance and Lateness Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

#### **15. Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating our Child Protection & Safe-Guarding Policy.**

The responsibility to monitor, review and evaluate the Child Protection & Safe-Guarding Policy rests with the Board of Governors, Principal and Designated Teacher.

Monitoring will include reviewing the day-to-day outworking of the policy in practice so will be ongoing.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Team and approved 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 Schools 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.

<b>Date Policy Reviewed:</b>	
<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Designated Teacher</b>
<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Principal</b>
<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Chair of Board of Governors</b>

**Remember to use Receive, Reassure, Respond, Report and Record**



Member of staff does not investigate but may use *'Discreet Preliminary Clarification'*

**BUT MUST ACT PROMPTLY**

*'Child Concern Form'* is completed

Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher Informed and a discussion of next steps had

Designated Teacher meets with Principal to plan course of action and ensures that the *'Child Concern Form'* is stored in a secure location.

A written record should also be kept of the meeting.  
If required, advice should be sought from a CPSS officer.

**Child Protection Referral is required**

DT seeks consent of the parent/carer and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) unless this would put the child at risk of significant harm then telephones the Children's Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI if a child is at immediate risk. He/she submits a completed UNOCINI form within 24 hours.

Designated Teacher clarifies/discusses concern with child/parent/carers and decides if child protection referral is or is not

**Child Protection Referral is not required**

School may consider other options including monitoring the situation within an agreed timescale; signposting or referring the child/parent/carers to appropriate support services such as the Children's Services Gateway Team or local family support hub with parental consent, and child/young person's consent (where appropriate).

Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed as to the action taken. The Designated Teacher will maintain a written record of all decisions and actions taken and ensure that this record is appropriately and securely stored.