CARRICKFERGUS

MODEL SCHOOL

Policy for Child Protection and Safe-Guarding

Reviewed September 2026
(taking into account new guidance from May 2026)

Carrickfergus Model School – Child Protection and Safe-Guarding Policy

"Every child and young person in Northern Ireland has the right to feel safe, valued and supported throughout their educational journey. Children and young people learn, develop and achieve their potential when they secured, valued and able to trust those around them. For many children and young people, school is much more than a place of learning. It is a place where they build friendships, develop confidence, experience stability and build trusted relationships."

"The safeguarding landscape continues to evolve. Children and young people face increasingly complex risks, including online harms, exploitation, domestic abuse and challenges relating to emotional health and wellbeing."

"Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Effective safeguarding depends not only on robust policies and procedures, but on the culture, we create every day. It requires children and young people to be listened to, concerns to be recognised and acted upon promptly, and all those working with children to understand and fulfil their responsibilities with confidence. Teachers, support staff, governors, wider education workforce, volunteers, parents and carers all play a vital role."

"Ultimately, safeguarding is about more than protecting young people from harm. It is about creating the conditions in which every child and young person can thrive, fulfil their potential and look to the future with confidence."

From Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A guide for schools: DENI (updated May 2026)

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

As a school our safeguarding aims are to:

- Be a safeguarding partner
- Build trusted relationships in an inclusive learning environment
- Identify concerns at an early stage
- Provide stability and emotional support
- Promote attendance, belonging and resilience
- Equip children with the knowledge and skills to stay safe; and
- Work with families and partner agencies to reduce risk and strengthen protective factors

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

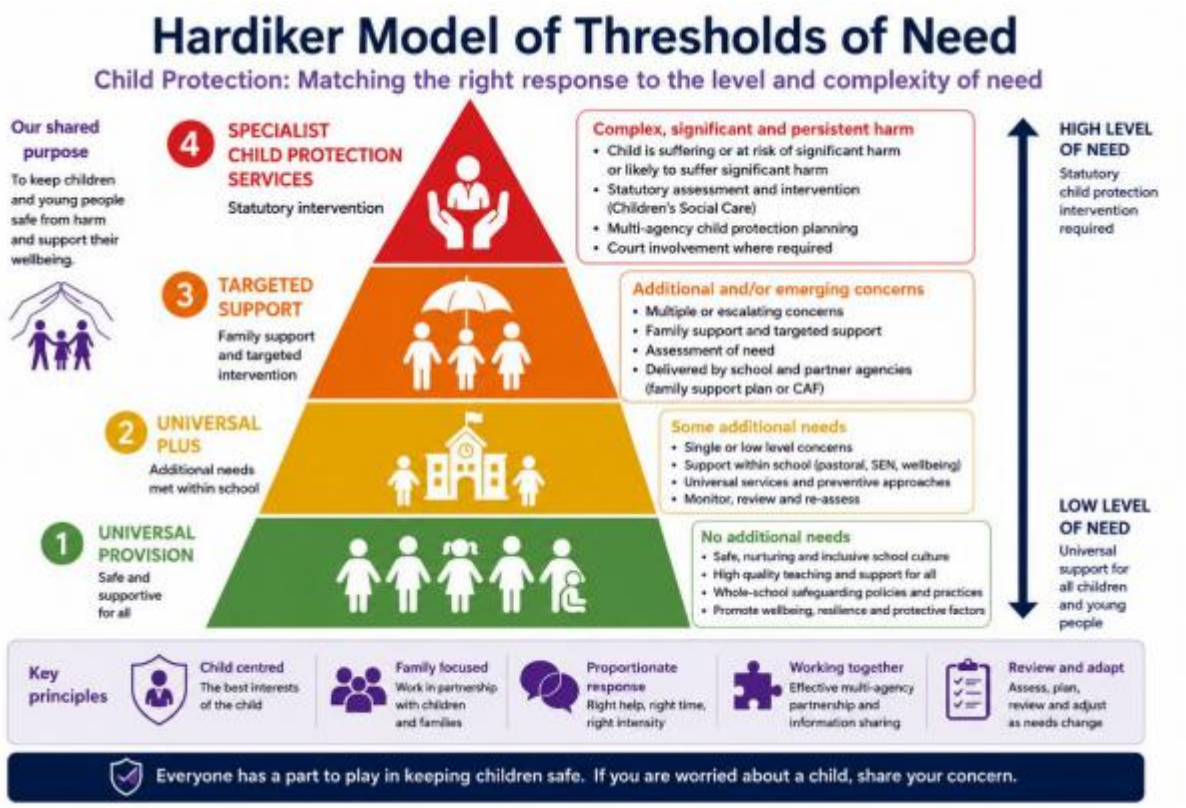
- The Criminal Law Act (NI)1967
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
- The Children (NI) Order 1995 **(principal legislative framework)**
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Oder 1998
- The Education (NI) Order 1998
- Family Homes and Domestic Violence (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
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland: Department of Health: Version 2.3: September 2026
- All other applicable up to date DE Circulars

2. Definitions

Child Protection is a core element of safeguarding and relates to the specific activity undertaken to protect individual children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Safeguarding is the overarching responsibility to protect children, young people and those over 18 who could be 'at risk' from harm, prevent impairment of their health or development and ensure their circumstances reflect safe and effective care.

Adult Safeguarding is a person aged over 18 who needs care and support and is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation.



3. Duty to Co-operate and Information Sharing

Our school has a duty to co-operate with relevant agencies to safeguard children and young people. Information must be shared to protect a child or young person. Data protection legislation does not prevent information sharing for safeguarding purposes and cannot be used as a reason to delay or withhold information.

4. Key Roles & Responsibilities

1. **Department of Education (DE)**
    - Setting policy and strategic direction for safeguarding in education
    - Issuing statutory guidance and standards
    - Ensuring alignment with legislation and wider government strategies; and

- Providing oversight and assurance of safeguarding arrangements across the system

2. **Education Training Inspectorate (ETI)**
    - Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the child protection and safeguarding arrangements
    - Make evidence-based evaluations informed by the school or setting's approach to implementing child protection and safeguarding policies, arrangements for recruitment, vetting and staff training, and monitoring the evaluating practice and oversight arrangements
    - Complete DE commissioned work in relation to child protection and safeguarding and provide policy advice

3. **Education Authority (EA – CPSS)**

- Provide advice, guidance and support schools and settings
- Support Principals, designated teachers and school leaders
- Contribute to child protection processes as part of its statutory role within the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
- Ensuring the provision of services that support safeguarding and wellbeing

4. **The Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are in place and effective for their school.

Boards must:

- Ensure robust safeguarding and child protection policies are in place and implemented
- Designate a specific member of the Board to lead and advise governors on child protection and safeguarding matters
- Ensure appropriate training for Governors and staff is completed;
- Monitor and review safeguarding is a standing agenda item for discussion and oversight
- Ensure that appropriate record keeping and reporting arrangements are in place
- Consider safeguarding in all relevant decisions, including staffing, curriculum, premises and external engagement

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.

5. **The Chairperson of the Board of Governors:**

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.

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.

6. 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
- Ensure that DTs are given sufficient protected time, training and support to carry out their role effectively
- Ensure that the School has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and accessible
- Ensure that he 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.

7. The Principal

The Principal must:

- Appoint at least 1 designated teacher for child protection and additional deputies as required
- Ensure that safeguarding policies are consistently implemented
- Create a safe, inclusive and supportive culture
- Ensure that staff understand their responsibilities, receive appropriate training and know how to respond to concerns
- Ensure that concerns are responded to promptly and appropriately
- Support and supervise the designated teacher in carrying out their role
- Ensure effective liaison with external agencies
- Provide a written confidential safeguarding report annually regarding:
  - Safeguarding and child protection activity
  - Staff and governor training
  - Policy review and implementation
  - Record keeping
  - Attendance and emerging safeguarding themes
  - Allegations against staff

- Use of external support
- Priorities for further improvement

8. The Designated Teacher

The DT is responsible for:

- Ensuring that, in conjunction with the Principal, all training for BoGs and staff is up to date
- Acting as the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns
- Advising and supporting staff
- Ensuring that concerns are recorded, assessed and responded to appropriately
- Make referrals to social services when required
- Maintain secure and accurate safeguarding records
- Represent the school in multi-agency processes, including case conferences

9. The Safeguarding Team

This team does not replace the responsibility of individual staff members to recognise, report and record safeguarding concerns. All staff remain responsible for safeguarding and child protection.
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): Mrs Julie Kirkland
   (jkirkland601@c2kni.net)
5. Vice-Principal / SENCO / Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mrs Julie Kirkland
   (jkirkland601@c2kni.net)

10. 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.

All staff and volunteers should:

- Set an example

- Adhere to the staff code of conduct (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).
- Be aware of signs and indicators of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries
- Listen to children and young people and take concerns seriously
- Report concerns immediately in line with the setting procedures
- Record concerns accurately and promptly
- Participate in training and safeguarding activities
- Never assume that someone else with act
- Avoid private meetings with pupils,. Physical contact with pupils unless warranted, be honest and confidential when required

11. Children and Young People

Pupils will be supported to express their views and be listened to, taken seriously and appropriately considered in safeguarding decisions. Children's age and stage should be taken into account but children are not responsible for safeguarding decisions or outcomes.

School will:

- Create a safe, inclusive environment where pupils feel able to raise concerns
- Ensure that pupils know who they can talk to and how to seek help
- Provide age-appropriate information about safeguarding and sources of support

12. Parents and Carers

School will:

- Communicate clearly with parents/carers about safeguarding arrangements and expectations
- Promote open, respectful and professional engagement
- Offer early support where concerns arise to help children remain safely within their family networks
- Make decisions based on the welfare of the child being paramount

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

Parents are not allowed in the school building without permission.

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.

13. 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

5. 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 ensuring that:

- safeguarding is embedded, not isolated;
- prevention and early intervention are prioritised;
- all staff understand and fulfil their role;
- staff feel that they can raise concerns freely; and,
- children are safe, heard and supported to engage with learning.

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
- Our school website is very informative for staff, parents and pupils

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
- Assemblies every month feature an element of the preventative curriculum

6. Our School setting Ethos, Culture and Environment

A safe setting is underpinned by a positive, inclusive and respectful culture.

School will aim to ensure:

- clear expectations for behaviour and conduct;
- safe physical and emotional environment;
- promote a culture of openness, trust and respect;
- effective management of visitors, shared education activities and use of premises; and,
- promotion of equality, inclusion and respect.

7. Pupil Emotional Health and Wellbeing Pupil

Wellbeing is integral to safeguarding and underpins learning, engagement and attainment.

School:

- implements a whole-school approach to emotional health and wellbeing in line with the DE Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework;
- promotes resilience, connection and a sense of belonging; and,
- uses pastoral systems to identify and respond to emerging need. Where there are concerns regarding a child's mental health, schools and settings should engage with parents/carers and suggest contact with GP or other specialist services.

Reference should be made to our Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Policy.

8.Behaviour, Addressing-Bullying and Pastoral Support

Behaviour and pastoral systems are key safeguarding mechanisms.

These systems include:

- children with SEND;
- children in need and/or on the child protection register;
- children looked after;
- behaviour and addressing bullying measures are clear, consistently applied and understood;
- early intervention where concerns arise; and,
- graduated pastoral support aligned to level of need.

School will:

- maintain and implement an addressing bullying policy;
- record all incidents of alleged bullying behaviour;
- identify and address patterns and trends;
- provide support to pupils involved; and,
- consult with pupils and parents/carers when reviewing policy and practice.

Bullying, including prejudice-based and online bullying, may constitute a safeguarding concern and must be responded to accordingly. Reference should be made to our Anti-Bullying Policy.

9.Trauma-Informed and Restorative Practice

School recognises that trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), can impact behaviour, relationships and learning.

Where appropriate we will:

- apply trauma-informed approaches that prioritise safety, predictability and support;
- avoid practices that may re-traumatise; and,
- use restorative practices to support accountability, repair relationships and reintegration. This work should be undertaken collaboratively with the child, their family and external services as necessary.

10.Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups of Learners

Some children and young people may face additional or cumulative vulnerability.

Safeguarding approaches will be responsive to the needs of:
• Children Looked After (CLA) and care-experienced children;
• Newcomer pupils, including refugees and asylum seekers;
• Traveller children;
• children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEN/D);
• children with medical needs;
• children experiencing poverty, domestic abuse or family instability;
• children at risk of exploitation (sexual or criminal);
• Young Carers;
• children under 16 (or under 19 with a statement of special educational needs) being cared for by someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more; and,
• Adults at risk (including pupils aged 18+ in school settings).

11. Complaints Process

The complaints process puts in place should ensure that complaints in relation to decisions made by schools or Boards of Governors are directed to the school Board of Governors in the first instance. Reference should be made to our school's Complaints Policy and Process.

If following this procedure, a person remains unsatisfied with the decisions made or the time taken to conclude the process is unreasonable, they have the right to ask the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman to consider unresolved complaints about maladministration, which is generally taken to mean poor administration or the wrong application of rules in all publicly funded schools in Northern Ireland.

This means that any pupil or parent who believes that they have been treated unfairly as a result of the actions or decision of a school's Board of Governors will be able to bring their complaint to the Ombudsman after the school's complaints process has been exhausted. More information on NI.

12.Whistleblowing

School has arrangements for staff to raise concerns about unsafe practice, leadership failures or misconduct. All staff and volunteers know how to raise concerns about the conduct or practice of colleagues where they believe a person may be at risk.

13.Safe School Site, Premises and Supervision

School aims to ensure that premises are secure, appropriately supervised and designed to reduce any safeguarding risks.
This includes:

- controlled access to the school site and clear visitor management procedures;
- regular, documented risk assessments of buildings, grounds, and any areas used by pupils;

- appropriate supervision arrangements during the school day, including break and transition times;
- safeguarding considerations in the use of toilets, changing areas, and less spaces within the setting; and
- clear emergency procedures including evacuation and lockdown.

Arrangements are proportionate, reviewed regularly and informed by identified risk.

14.Visitors to School and Use of Premises

School has a robust visitor management procedure proportionate to the role and level of access.

We ensure that:
- visitor identities are verified and records maintained;
- visitors are supervised in line with their role and level of vetting;
- safeguarding checks are completed where required by role; and,
- visitors are informed of how to raise safeguarding concerns.

15. Shared Education and Off-Site Activities, including Residentials

Where pupils participate in shared education, educational visits, work placements, residentials or other off-site activities, there are clear arrangements in place before activity begins.

Partner schools and organisations should agree in advance
- agreed safeguarding roles and responsibilities between partner organisations, including who will lead;
- supervision arrangements and staffing arrangements must be defined and risk assessed;
- information sharing must be lawful, proportionate, and support safeguarding;
- how information will be communicated to the child's home and where appropriate statutory agencies;
- visiting staff and organisations must adhere to the host school's safeguarding procedures.

Risk assessments must reflect the activity, location and needs of pupils.

16. Safe Spaces and Pastoral Support Areas

At the Model we have worked hard to provide designated spaces to support wellbeing and pastoral engagement.

To use these appropriately;
- they are appropriately supervised depending on the age and stage of the child
- staff must understand safeguarding responsibilities and escalation routes; and,
- access should be inclusive and free from stigma.

17. Health and Safety Interface

Safeguarding and Health and Safety are distinct but can overlap and must operate in a complementary way.

Schools aims to ensure that:
• risk assessments should consider both physical safety and potential safeguarding risks;
• Staff understand reporting routes for accidents, incidents and safeguarding concerns; and,
• leadership should ensure a coordinated approach across policies and practice.

Reference should be made to our Health and Safety Policies.

18. Policies

The suite of policies must function as an integrated safeguarding framework, not as a collection of standalone or duplicative documents.

Minimum required policies:

- Child Protection
- Recruitment & Selection
- Staff Code of conduct
- Addressing Bullying
- Online / Acceptable Use
- Attendance
- Intimate Care
- Complaints

Additional Recommended policies:

- Behaviour
- Pastoral Care / Wellbeing
- Healthy Relationships
- Supporting Pupils with medical needs
- Substance Use / Misuse
- Critical Incident Response

19.Other Adults in school

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.

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. Post primary settings will also have their own arrangements.

20.Recognise – Respond – Report – Record – Refer

The Children Oder 1995 defines harm as ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development.

This includes:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Ill-treatment by domestic abuse
- Neglect

Significant harm is the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention by statutory services. This includes:

- Severity and impact of the harm
- Duration and frequency
- Vulnerability of the child
- Parental capacity to protect

Types and Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

Abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, or take the form of neglect. It can occur in person or online.

Staff should remain alert to indicators including but not limited to:

- Unexplained injuries or repeated injuries
- Significant changes in behaviour, mood or presentation
- Persistent issues relating to hygiene, hunger or inappropriate clothing
- Sexualised behaviour or language inappropriate to the child's age or stage of development
- Reluctance to go home or expressed fear of specific individuals
- Frequent absence or patterns of missing from education

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

TYPES AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Children and Young People

Abuse can happen to any child or young person.

Spot it. Report it. Support them.

Abuse is a violation of a child or young person's rights and can seriously impact their health, development and wellbeing.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Involves hurting or injuring a child or young person, or putting them at risk of harm.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Unexplained bruises, cuts, burns or injuries
- Injuries in shapes (handprints, bite marks)
- Frequent injuries or inconsistent explanations
- Fear of going home or of a particular person
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Aggression or self-harm

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Involves the persistent emotional mistreatment of a child or young person that impacts their emotional wellbeing.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Low self-esteem or lack of confidence
- Withdrawal, anxiety or depression
- Sudden changes in behaviour or mood
- Seeking constant reassurance
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- Developmental delays without explanation

SEXUAL ABUSE

Involves forcing or coercing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour
- Sexualised drawings, play or language
- Physical pain, itching or bruising in genital/anal area
- Pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections
- Fear of a person or place
- Reluctance to get changed for PE/swimming

NEGLECT

Involves the persistent failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical or emotional needs.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Poor hygiene or inappropriate clothing
- Constant hunger or asking for food
- Untreated medical or dental issues
- Fatigue, falling asleep in class
- Lack of supervision
- Living in an unhygienic environment

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Children and young people can be harmed by witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse at home.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Anxiety, fear or sadness
- Changes in behaviour or school performance
- Physical injuries
- Fear of a parent/carer or going home
- Overly protective behaviour towards siblings
- Re-enactment of abuse through play

CHILD EXPLOITATION

Involves exploiting a child or young person for someone else's gain, benefit or advantage.

This can be sexual or criminal.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Going missing from home or school
- Contact with unknown adults
- Carrying weapons or excessive money
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Signs of substance misuse
- Secrecy about activities or relationships

ONLINE ABUSE

Involves harm caused through the use of technology, online platforms or devices.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Spending excessive time online
- Withdrawal when online or after going online
- Upset after using devices
- Secretive about online activity
- Exposure to inappropriate content
- Receiving messages from unknown people

REMEMBER

Indicators can be signs that a child or young person may need help. Not all signs mean abuse is happening.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Notice** – Trust your concerns
- **Listen** – Listen to what they are saying
- **Respond** – Report concerns without delay
- **Report** – Follow your school's safeguarding procedures
- **Support** – Help keep the child/young person safe

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS

Report to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or follow your school's safeguarding procedures.

SAFEGUARD | RESPECT | SUPPORT | REPORT

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

TYPES AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Adults at Risk in Education Settings

Adults at risk may include 18+ pupils, young adults up to 25 in education or training, parents/carers, visitors, volunteers, contractors and members of the school community.

Abuse can happen to any adult.

Spot it.
Report it.
Support them.

Abuse is a violation of an adult's rights and can seriously impact their health, safety, dignity and quality of life.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Involves the use of physical force which may cause pain, injury or impairment.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Unexplained bruises, cuts, burns or injuries
- Injuries in shapes (handprints, bite marks)
- Frequent injuries or inconsistent explanations
- Pain or discomfort when touched
- Withdrawal or fear of certain people

PSYCHOLOGICAL/ EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Involves the persistent emotional mistreatment that causes distress and undermines self-worth.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Low mood, anxiety or depression
- Loss of confidence or self-esteem
- Withdrawal from activities or people
- Changes in behaviour or personality
- Expressions of fear, anger or distress

FINANCIAL OR MATERIAL ABUSE

Involves the misuse or theft of money, property or possessions.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Missing money or possessions
- Unexplained bank withdrawals or transactions
- Bills or debts not being paid
- Pressure to sign documents
- Living in unsuitable conditions

NEGLECT OR ACTS OF OMISSION

Involves the persistent failure to meet an adult's care and support needs.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Poor personal hygiene or unkempt appearance
- Dirty or unsafe learning or living environment
- Inadequate food, water or heating
- Missed medication or medical appointments
- Lack of necessary clothing or equipment

SEXUAL ABUSE

Involves any non-consensual sexual activity or behaviour.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Unexplained genital injuries or pain
- Bruising on inner thighs, buttocks or chest
- Sexualised behaviour or language
- Fear, anxiety or withdrawal
- Changes in mood or behaviour

DISCRIMINATION ABUSE

Involves treating an adult unfairly because of their characteristics or beliefs.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Being treated less favourably than others
- Denial of access to services or support
- Harassment, bullying or derogatory comments
- Exclusion or unfair restriction

ORGANISATIONAL ABUSE

Involves poor practice within an education setting that disregards an adult's needs and rights.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS

- Poor standards of care or support
- Lack of procedures or staff training
- Long waits or delays in support
- Ignoring complaints or concerns
- Inappropriate use of restraint

REMEMBER

These indicators can be signs that an adult may need help. Not all signs mean abuse is happening. Always listen, be respectful and take concerns seriously.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Notice
Be alert to changes and signs of abuse.

Listen
Listen to the person and take them seriously.

Respond
Ask if they are safe and what support they need.

Report
Report your concerns to the Designated Person for Adult Safeguarding without delay.

Support
Support the adult and help keep them safe.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS

Report to the Designated Person for Adult Safeguarding or your education setting's safeguarding lead, or contact your local Health and Social Care Trust Adult Safeguarding Team.

Everyone has the right to live in safety, with dignity and respect. | CONFIDENTIAL | RESPECTFUL | SUPPORTIVE | RESPONSIVE

21. Other forms of abuse

1. Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation

Child exploitation involves coercion, manipulation or deception which results in a child being exploited for sexual activity or criminal purposes. Exploitation must always be treated as a form of abuse.

Possible indicators may include:
• unexplained money, gifts, or new possessions;
• association with older individuals or unfamiliar adults;
• going missing, staying out late, or disengaging from education;
• use of multiple phones or secrecy around online activity; and,
• involvement in anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Staff must:
• treat exploitation as abuse;
• share concerns immediately with the DT; and
• consider risks both within and outside the home.

Child exploitation is recognised as a form of modern slavery and human trafficking. A National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referral should be made for every child who is suspected of being a victim of exploitation.

Referrals to the NRM can only be made by designated organisations known as First Responders. Youth Work Alliance, PSNI and HSC Trusts are recognised First Responder organisations and can therefore submit referrals.

2. Domestic and Sexual Abuse

Children may be directly harmed by domestic or sexual abuse or may experience significant adverse impacts arising from abuse within the household.

Indicators may include:
• heightened anxiety, fearfulness, or hypervigilance;
• injuries or unexplained absences following weekends or holidays;
• disclosure of conflict, coercive control, or violence at home; and,
• changes in mood, sleep, or concentration.

Staff should:
• recognise the potential impact on the child's safety and wellbeing;
• avoid asking leading questions; and
• report concerns promptly in line with safeguarding procedures.
• Be aware that domestic abuse can continue after a relationship has ended.

All members of a school's safeguarding team must complete the Operation Encompass 'Key Adult' training.

3. Child on Child Abuse (including Harassment and Violence)

All staff should recognise that children are capable of abusing other children (including online) and should be clear about their school or college's policy and procedures with regard to child-on-child abuse.

At Carrickfergus Model we have a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Concerns should never be brushed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up", "boys being boys" or "girls being girls" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny and an unsafe environment for children.

Whilst it is more likely that girls will be those who experience abuse from boys as perpetrators, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Child-on-child abuse can take the forms of:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (also known as teenage relationship abuse).
- physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm.
- physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon.
- harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence and sexual harassment
- consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi nudes, including those generated using AI.
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
- 'Upskirting' and 'downblousing' (these are criminal offences), which typically involve taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their body to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

4. Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Children and young people may display sexualised behaviours that are inappropriate, concerning or harmful to themselves or others.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) refers to developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by a child or young person which causes harm or has the potential to cause harm. Such behaviour can occur in any educational setting, including primary schools, and should always be taken seriously. Where harmful sexual behaviour is alleged, witnessed or disclosed, the immediate priority is the safety and

wellbeing of the child or young person who has experienced the behaviour. This is particularly important where both children attend the same school or educational setting.

School will take prompt and proportionate action to protect and support the child or young person experiencing the behaviour, including considering whether changes to timetables, supervision, transport, break arrangements or class groupings are required so that the child or young person who has experienced the behaviour feels safe and is able to continue their education with minimal disruption.

School will listen carefully to the wishes and feelings of the child or young person experiencing the behaviour and their parents/carers, provide ongoing pastoral support, and ensure they are kept informed of the actions being taken.

The child or young person experiencing the behaviour should never be expected to manage contact with the other child or to alter their educational experience unnecessarily.

The child displaying the behaviour should also be supported appropriately. In some cases, they may have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma or other unmet needs and may require assessment and intervention from relevant services.

The Designated Teacher should:
• take immediate steps to safeguard all children involved;
• record the concern accurately and objectively;
• consult with Social Services, the PSNI and other relevant agencies where appropriate;
• inform parents/carers, unless doing so would place a child at further risk;
• undertake a risk assessment and implement a clear safety and support plan; and,
• monitor arrangements regularly to ensure that the child or young person experiencing the behaviour remains safe and supported. Schools should adopt a child-centred and trauma-informed approach, balancing the need to safeguard the child or young person experiencing the behaviour, manage risk and provide appropriate support to all children involved.

5. Digital Safety and Online Harms

Digital technologies are an integral part of children and young people's learning and social lives. While online environments can provide significant educational and social benefits, they can also expose children and young people to a range of safeguarding risks.

Online harms may include, but are not limited to:
• cyberbullying and online harassment;
• exposure to harmful or inappropriate content;
• online grooming and sexual exploitation;
• coercion, sextortion and the sharing of self-generated sexual images;
• child sexual abuse material;
• radicalisation and extremist content;
• disinformation and harmful online challenges;
• financial scams and fraud;

• misuse of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies; and,
• excessive or problematic online use that impacts on wellbeing, attendance or learning.

6. Mental Health and Suicide Concerns

Education settings play an important role in early identification and support but should not replace clinical assessment or intervention. Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, still have an important role to play, by promoting good mental wellbeing through the whole school approach as set out in the Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework.

Indicators to watch out for:
• persistent low mood, withdrawal, or distress;
• expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness;
• self-harm or talk of suicide; and,
• sudden behavioural changes

All expressions of suicidal ideation or self-harm must be treated as safeguarding concerns. The DT must be informed immediately. In urgent situations, immediate medical or emergency services must be contacted.

7. Other types of abuse now appearing in Northern Ireland

The following types of abuse are low in incidence but are appearing across the Northern Ireland education system.

- FGM Female genital mutilation:
- Honour Based Violence Honour Based Abuse
- Child/ Forced Marriage Forced marriage

8. Immediate Safeguarding Actions

Where a child is at immediate risk of harm, staff must take prompt action to ensure the child's safety, including informing the DT without delay and where necessary contacting EA CPSS for guidance and then if required the local Trust Gateway team and/ or PSNI. **Staff must not delay action or attempt to manage high-risk situations alone.**

22. Responding to concerns

When a child or young person discloses information that gives rise to a safeguarding concern, staff must:

- Listen carefully and take the disclosure seriously;
- reassure them they have done the right thing;
- make no promises of confidentiality;
- avoid leading questions or investigative actions; and

- record the child's words accurately and as soon as possible. Staff should explain next steps in an age-appropriate way and report immediately to the DT.

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, a 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.

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)

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

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.

Dealing with Allegations of Abuse made Against a Member of Staff

Schools must have clear, accessible and well-understood procedures for managing allegations that a member of staff or volunteer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or young person;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or,
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm.

All allegations must be:

- treated seriously and acted upon immediately;
- reported without delay to the Principal and/ or Designated Teacher;
- managed strictly in line with agreed safeguarding procedures, including timely liaison with:

Social Services / PSNI (where appropriate) and the relevant Employing Authority (e.g. EA CPSS/CCMS).

All allegations must be recorded in the 'Record of Child Abuse Complaints' book (known as the Hard Back Book)

• school will always consult with EA CPSS or relevant managing authority prior to undertaking any internal investigation.

• school will ensure confidentiality, fairness, and appropriate support must be maintained for all parties;

accurate and contemporaneous records must be kept of decisions, actions and rationale;

• proportionate risk management measures must be considered and reviewed where required.

Boards of Governors must ensure that these procedures are implemented consistently, monitored and subject to appropriate governance oversight.

Low-Level Concerns (Code of Conduct Concerns)
The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'.

Low-level concerns relate to behaviour by staff or volunteers that:
• fall below expected standards set out in a school's staff code of conduct; and,
• does not meet the threshold for a formal allegation but may indicate emerging risk. Examples may include:
• being overly familiar with pupils;
• inconsistent application of professional boundaries; or,
• inappropriate use of language, tone or behaviour. Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. For example: suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken. It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of schools and colleges from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings.

Settings must:

- promote a culture of openness, professionalism and challenge;
- ensure all low-level concerns are recorded, reviewed, and addressed appropriately; and, • identify patterns of behaviour that may require escalation.

23. Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

School has a written 'Staff Code of Conduct' that clearly sets out expectations for professional behaviour and safeguarding practice. This includes guidance on:

- appropriate relationships with pupils;
- use of social media and digital communication;
- physical contact and intimate care (where relevant);
- one-to-one working;
- confidentiality and information sharing; and,
- responding to safeguarding disclosures. All staff and volunteers must:
- be familiar with and adhere to the Code of Conduct; and,
- understand that their behaviour, both in and outside of the setting, may have safeguarding implications. Principals/ Leaders must ensure that the Code of Conduct is:
- regularly reviewed and communicated clearly; and, • embedded through induction, training, supervision and professional dialogue.

24.Safer Recruitment and Vetting

Safer Recruitment and Vetting DE Circular 2025/06 is currently under review, however it must be stressed that pre-employment and Access NI Checks must be completed BEFORE a person can commence regulated activity.

All staff and volunteers are subject to robust safer recruitment processes, including:

- appropriate vetting checks, including Access NI prior to commencing work;
- verification of identity, qualifications, and employment history;
- obtaining and scrutinising references; and,
- that recruitment panels include trained safer recruitment members.

Additional safeguards must include:

- an accurate central record of recruitment and vetting checks for all relevant staff and volunteers;
- clear role descriptions with safeguarding responsibilities;
- exploration and recording of gaps in employment history; and,
- appropriate supervision and oversight of volunteers

A recent amendment to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 means that all staff or volunteers in any regular contact with children or young people are undertaking 'regulated activity' and must be Access NI checked. The previous supervision exemption is no longer valid. Boards of Governors must maintain oversight of recruitment practices and ensure compliance with statutory vetting requirements. Safer recruitment is a critical and preventative safeguarding control.

25.Managing Professional Boundaries

Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries is essential to safeguarding.

Staff must:

- act in a way that is professional, transparent, and accountable;
- avoid situations that could be misinterpreted or place themselves or pupils at risk; and,
- ensure all interactions with pupils are appropriate, proportionate, and recorded where necessary. Schools should provide clear guidance on:
- one-to-one work with pupils;
- off-site activities and educational visits;
- use of personal devices and communication platforms; and,
- physical contact and support. School Principals and/ or Setting Leaders must promote a culture of professional curiosity, reflection and challenge, where staff/ volunteers feel confident to raise concerns about practice.

26.Training and Workforce Development

All staff/ volunteers must receive appropriate safeguarding training that enables them to recognise, respond to, and report concerns effectively.

Minimum expectations:

- safeguarding as part of induction training for all staff and volunteers;
- regular safeguarding updates (at least annually); and,
- role-specific training for:

➢ Designated Teachers and Deputies
➢ Governors
➢ Pastoral and support staff Training must be in line with SBNI Child Safeguarding Learning and Development Strategy and Framework 2026 - 203032 and include:
➢ recognising signs of abuse, neglect, and exploitation
➢ responding appropriately to disclosures
➢ understanding limits to education role referral pathways;
➢ awareness of emerging safeguarding risks; and,
➢ professional boundaries and staff conduct.

Schools must also:

- promote continuous professional learning;
- support staff wellbeing, recognising the emotional impact of safeguarding work; and,
- ensure access to advice, supervision, and support.

A well-trained workforce is essential to ensuring that education functions as a key safeguarding system, supporting early identification, intervention, and protection.

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.

↓

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

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.

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 if appropriately and securely stored.

27.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

28.Record Keeping and Information Sharing

Effective record keeping is a core safeguarding function. It supports early identification of risk, informed decision-making, and provides a clear audit trail for accountability. School will ensure that safeguarding records are accurate, timely and factual.

Records will:

- be completed as soon as possible and no later than 24hrs after a concern is identified;
- be relevant, proportionate, clear, legible and securely dated, timed and attributed;
- maintain a clear chronology of concerns, actions taken and decisions made;
- record what happened, what action was taken and the rationale for decisions;
- clearly distinguish between fact, professional judgement and third-party information;
- include low level, emerging and cumulative concerns; and
- record decisions not to refer, including rationale.

Record keeping systems will be robust, secure, access-controlled and compliant with Data Protection Act 2018 / GDPR.

Staff will:

- record factually and objectively;
- do not include assumptions or speculation; and
- record even if concern appears minor – patterns may emerge.

All Notes of Concern must be passed to the DT and retained in the safeguarding file.

The school will 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.

29.Early Referal

Early Referral for Support – Family Support Hubs A Family Support Hub is a multi-agency network of statutory, community and voluntary organisations that provide early intervention services, or work with families who need support. The network accepts referrals and uses their knowledge of local service providers to signpost families with specific needs to an appropriate service.

The specific purpose of hubs is as follows:

- To improve access to early intervention family Support services by matching the needs of referred families to family support providers;
- To improve coordination of early intervention family support services by creating a collaborative network of community, voluntary and statutory providers;
- To improve awareness of early intervention family support services;
- To assess the level of unmet need for early intervention family support services and inform the Trust Outcomes Group. There are currently 29 Family Support Hubs in operation covering all of Northern Ireland. Hubs coordinate existing statutory/community and voluntary services.

30.Making a Formal Referral (UNOCINI)

A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral is used to request support or protection from Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts.

The DT is responsible for:
• determining when a referral is required;
• submitting the referral promptly; and,
• ensuring information is clear, factual, and evidence based.

Staff must provide accurate information to support the referral and continue to support the child within the setting. Early referral is a protective action and can prevent escalation of harm.

31.Working with Other Agencies

Effective child protection and safeguarding requires timely and proportionate multiagency collaboration.

School will:
• share information appropriately and lawfully;
• participate in relevant multi-agency processes; and,
• work with local HSC Trusts, PSNI, EA, and other relevant partners.

Concerns around information sharing must not prevent timely action to protect a child.

32.Storing and Sharing Information

Safeguarding File Content

A separate, confidential safeguarding file is maintained for each child (and 'adult at risk' where applicable). This file is kept separately from the general pupil record with only the DT and DDT having access.

Safeguarding files must include where relevant:

- a chronology of concerns and actions;
- all Notes of Concern;
- records of decisions and professional rationale;
- UNOCINI assessments and referral forms;
- records of referrals to Social Services or other agencies;
- records of engagement with children, parents/carers, staff and external agencies;
- any correspondence (sent and received);
- copies of any risk assessments, support plans and child protection plans;
- records of any multi-agency meetings and involvement with statutory services; and
- significant contextual information impacting on the child's welfare.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Safeguarding information is confidential and sensitive. School will share information on a need-to-know basis in a manner that is necessary, proportionate, relevant, timely and secure.

Consent should be sought where appropriate, however consent is not required where:
a child or 'adult at risk' may be at risk of harm; or
seeking consent may increase risk.

Schools must record:

- what information was shared;
- with whom;
- the purpose for sharing;
- the rationale for the decision (including decisions not to share).

The welfare of the child or 'adult at risk' is paramount. Information sharing must not be delayed where it is necessary to protect someone from harm.

Storage, Retention and Transfer of Records

Safeguarding files are stored securely, with access restricted to the Principal, DT and DDT.

Settings must ensure:

- electronic systems are password protected and access controlled;
- a record is kept of access to safeguarding files; and
- records are only removed from the premises where required for safeguarding purposes and transported securely.

Settings has in place a 'Retention and Disposal Policy'. As a minimum this must include:

- safeguarding (child protection) files must be retained until the child's date of birth + 30 years;
- records of allegations against staff must be retained indefinitely (unless the member of staff is fully exonerated following investigation).

When a pupil transfers, relevant safeguarding and child protection records must be transferred promptly, securely and separately from the main school record. This includes child protection files, notes of concern, risk assessments and safeguarding plans. The Principal and DT must ensure that the receiving school is informed without delay of any safeguarding concerns or vulnerabilities. Where concerns are ongoing or significant, the DT should make direct contact with the receiving DT to ensure appropriate support and protective arrangements are in place from the child's first day. Where the receiving school is unknown, the Education Welfare Service must be notified. All transfers must be recorded.

Disposal of Records

At the end of the retention period, records must be securely destroyed and the disposal recorded. Records must not be destroyed where they may be required for investigation, inquiry or legal proceedings.

33. 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

34. 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.

35. Child Protection and Safeguarding Companion

The Child Protection and Safeguarding in Education Guidance for schools and education settings in Northern Ireland has produced a Child Protection and Safeguarding Companion. This sits alongside this policy and other guidance available to school.

This policy is a working document and may be amended according to new guidance or the experience of our school setting.

36. Summary

Safeguarding and child protection are fundamental to Carrickfergus Model Primary School. We want to ensure that every child and young person is safe, supported and able to thrive.

If a parent has a child protection concern at

Carrickfergus Model Primary School

1. I have a concern about my child's or another child's safety in school
2. I can talk to the class teacher
3. If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Designated Teachers for Child Protection: Mrs Miller or Mrs Kirkland
4. If I am still concerned, I can write to the Chair of Board of Governors. Contact details are available from the school office.
5. If I am still concerned, I can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman.

   Telephone: 0800 34 34 24

   Visit: nipso.org.uk

AT ANY TIME

At any time, I can contact the Northern Trust Children's Services Referral Gateway Team:

0300 1234 333 / 028 9442 4459

Outside normal working hours:

028 9504 9999

I can also contact PSNI on 101.

If a child is in immediate danger, call **999.**

ONLINE SAFETY

For concerns about online sexual abuse, grooming or exploitation, visit:

ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

Otherwise contact PSNI on 101.