



# PASTORAL CARE

## Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Signed:  
Governors)

Peter Mc Nulty

(Chair of Board of

Donagh McNelis

(Principal)

Date:

3RD Nov. 2020



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## **1. CHILD PROTECTION ETHOS**

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

## **KEY PRINCIPLES OF SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, "Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland" (DOH, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools" (DENI Circular 2017/04) and the Safeguarding Board for NI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

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

- the voice of the child or young person should be heard, listened to and taken seriously
- we have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved
- in any incident the child's welfare must be paramount; this overrides all other considerations
- a proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first
- parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together
- Partnership
- Prevention
- responses should be proportionate to the circumstances
- Protection
- evidence based and informed decision making



## **2. RELATED POLICIES**

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

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Code of Conduct (See APPENDIX 7)
- Complaints policy
- Data protection Policy
- Educational Visits
- E-Safety Policy
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- ICT and access to the internet
- Intimate Care
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Records Management policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Special Educational Needs
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Whistleblowing policy

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing a copy should contact the School Principal or visit the school website at: <https://www.sionmillspcs.com/>

### **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **The School Safeguarding Team**

The following are members of the school's Safeguarding Team:

- Chair of the Board of Governors (Mr Tom Bradley)
- Designated Governor for Child Protection (Mrs Carmel Cronin)
- Principal (Mrs Oonagh McNelis)
- Designated Teacher (Mrs Wendy Kee)
- Deputy Designated Teachers (Mrs Oonagh McNelis, Mrs Grainne McAleer & Miss Catherine McGeady)

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#### **Board of Governors**

*The Board of Governors ensures that the school fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities in keeping with current legislation and DE guidance and is responsible for ensuring:*

- a designated governor for child protection is appointed
- a designated and deputy designated teacher are appointed
- Governors have a full understanding of the roles of the designated and deputy designated teachers for child protection
- safeguarding and child protection training is given to all staff and governors including refresher training
- the school has a child protection policy which is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every two years
- school has an anti-bullying policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying. [Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016]
- there is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school
- all school staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted, in line with DE Circular 2012/19
- Governors receive a full annual report on all child protection matters. This report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the school, including training for staff
- the school maintains the following child protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff and 2016/20 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools

## **Chair of the Board of Governors**

*The Chair of the Board of Governors is:*

- responsible for ensuring that a Child Protection policy is in place and that a safeguarding ethos is maintained in school
- has a pivotal role in creating and maintaining a safeguarding ethos
- receives training from CPSS and HR
- assumes lead responsibility in the event of a CP complaint or concern about the principal
- ensures compliance with legislation, Child Protection record keeping and policies

## **Designated Governor for Child Protection**

*The Designated Governor advises the Board of 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

## **Principal**

*The Principal is responsible for:*

- ensuring that all relevant DENI guidance in relation to child protection and safeguarding in particular "*Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection*" (1999) is implemented within the school
- enabling the Board of Governors fulfil their Child Protection duties by keeping them fully informed of all developments relating to safeguarding including changes to legislation, policy, procedures, DE circulars, inclusion of child protection on the BOG meeting agenda
- maintaining and securely storing the *School Record of Child Abuse Complaints* and to make it available at least annually to the Board of Governors
- the appointment of suitable teaching staff to the roles of Designated and Deputy Teacher for Child Protection who are enabled to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities
- ensuring that parents and pupils receive a copy or summary of the Child Protection Policy and Complaints Procedures at intake and a minimum of every 2 years.
- managing child protection concerns, allegations and complaints relating to staff.
- as secretary to the Board of Governors, assisting in fulfilling its safeguarding and child protection duties.
- establishing and managing the operational systems for safeguarding and child protection.
- ensuring safe and effective recruitment and selection of staff including awareness of safeguarding and child protection for new staff and volunteers.



## Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection

Every school is required to appoint a Designated Teacher with responsibility for Child Protection. They must also appoint a Deputy Designated Teacher who as a member of the Safeguarding team will support the Designated Teacher in carrying out their role including undertaking key duties in their absence.

*The role of Designated Teacher includes:*

- the induction and training of all school staff including support staff; Providing child protection training for all teaching and non-teaching staff (whole school training) to be delivered a minimum of once every two years.
- being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff or parents;
- responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns; maintaining and securely storing appropriate child protection records.
- maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services e.g. Family Support Hubs;
- liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection;
- keeping the school Principal informed
- promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school.
- providing an annual report to the Governors on child protection activity
- taking lead responsibility for the development and annual review of the school's child protection policy
- making referrals to other agencies, including making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where appropriate, with the Principal's knowledge
- attending child protection case conferences and other relevant case planning meetings where appropriate and practicable

*The Deputy Designated Teacher will deputise in their absence.*

### School Staff

Teachers, Classroom Assistants and other Support staff in school see children on a daily basis over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and a child may choose to disclose to them allegations of abuse.

Members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures to the Designated/Deputy Teacher for Child Protection/Principal.

In addition, class teachers should also keep the Designated Teacher informed in writing or verbally about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse. A pro-forma for reporting a concern or disclosure is included at Appendix 6

If a member of staff does not feel their concerns are being taken seriously or action to safeguard the child is not being taken by professionals and the child is considered to be at risk of continuing harm then they should speak to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Principal, Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection or to Social Services.

**Staff should not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, should not investigate nor should they ask leading questions.

### **Support Staff**

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

### **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.**

- if the child has a medical condition or educational need
- if there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child
- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's well-being; More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: [www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection)
- making requests to the school in advance for permission to allow their child to attend medical or other appointment including providing details of any arrangements for the collection of the child
- if there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school
- familiarising themselves with the schools safeguarding policies e.g. Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Internet and Child Protection Policies
- reporting to the school office when they visit the school
- sharing any concerns they may have in relation to their child with the school
- if there is any change in a child's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility

**It is essential that the school has up to date contact details for the parent/carer.**



#### **4. CHILD PROTECTION DEFINITIONS - DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE**

*"Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them".* Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures 2005).

The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child. **Signs and symptoms of abuse**, as well as their physical and behavioural indicators are included in **Appendices 1 and 2**.

##### **Definition of Harm**

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

**Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm.**

**Harm can be caused by:**

Sexual abuse

Emotional abuse

Physical abuse

Neglect

Exploitation

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.



**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on 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 – by a child's peers.

**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.

**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.

**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, and engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Although 'exploitation' is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR categories as children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse

### **Signs and Symptoms of Abuse**

See [Appendix 1](#)

### **Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

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

Please see these in [Appendix 2](#)

## **5. RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS**

Safeguarding is more than child protection. Safeguarding begins with promotion and preventative activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection. Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm<sup>1</sup>.

### **PROCEDURES FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO CHILD ABUSE**

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#### **How a Parent/Carer can make a Complaint**

At Sion Mills Primary School we aim to work closely with parents/carers in supporting all aspects of the child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern they can talk to the class teacher and/or the Principal/Designated teacher for child protection. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Public Protection Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the **flowchart in Appendix 4.**

#### **How a Parent can Raise a Concern**

If a parent has a concern they can talk to the **class teacher**, the designated or deputy designated teacher for child protection or the principal.

If they are still concerned they may talk to the chair of the Board of Governors. If after this a parent still has concerns they can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman.

At any time a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Central Referral Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in **Appendix 4.**

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

In Sion Mills PS if a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about

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



a child, the member of staff will complete a Note of Concern (see [Appendix 6](#)) and act promptly. **They will not investigate** - this is a matter for Social Services - but will discuss these concerns with the designated teacher or with the deputy designated teacher if he/she is not available. These notes or records should be:

- factual
- objective in nature
- include what was seen, said, heard or reported
- the place and time of who was present
- should be given to the designated teacher
- the person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The designated teacher will consult with the principal or other DDTs always taking care to avoid due delay. If required, advice may be sought from an Education Authority Child Protection Officer. The designated teacher may also seek clarification from the child or young person, their parent/carer.

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

If a child protection referral is required, the designated teacher should seek consent from the parent/carer and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm.

The designated teacher will phone the Gateway team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI referral form. Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed of the action taken.

For further detail please see [Appendix 4](#).

The designated teacher 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. The designated teacher may also consult with the Education Authority Western Region's designated officer for child protection or Social Services (Gateway Team) before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the designated teacher will telephone the Western Health & Social Services Gateway Team. She will also notify the Education Authority Western Region's designated officer for child protection. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be completed and forwarded to the Gateway team with a copy sent to the EA,WR designated officer for child protection.

The consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought prior to making a referral to Social Services. 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.

Where consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person is sought to make a referral to Social Services we will explain at the outset, openly and honestly, what and how information will, or could be shared and why, and seek their agreement to making the referral. In circumstances where the consent of the parent/carer and/or the young person is withheld we will consider and where possible respect their wishes. However our primary consideration must be the safety and welfare of the child and we will make a referral in cases where consent is withheld if we believe on the basis of the information available that it is in the best interests of the child/young person to do so.

**This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in Appendix 3.**

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

When a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff the Principal (or the designated teacher if the principal is not available) must be informed immediately. If the complaint is against the principal, then the designated teacher should be informed and he/she will inform the Chairperson of the board of governors who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority. The procedure as outlined in Appendix 5 will be followed.

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

**6. CONSENT, CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

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



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

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

#### **ATTENDANCE AT CHILD PROTECTION CASE CONFERENCES AND CORE GROUP MEETINGS**

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher or Principal may be invited to attend an Initial and/or Review Child Protection Case Conference or Core Group meeting convened by the Western Health & Social Care Trust and where possible a school representative will be in attendance. A written report will be provided for these meetings and will be compiled after discussion with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection Register will be monitored in line with what has been agreed in each child's protection plan.

#### **7. RECORD KEEPING**

In accordance with DE guidance we maintain clear guidelines for the recording, storage, retention and destruction of both manual and electronic records where they relate to child protection concerns. These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They 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.

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person.

In order to meet these requirements all child protection records, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in Sion Mills PS are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher 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 laptop or on a portable memory device, all is encrypted and appropriately password protected.

If a complaint about possible child abuse is received by the school and is not referred to Social Services – or if it is referred and Social Services do not place the child's name on the Child Protection Register – a record on the child's file will be permanently preserved and a confidential copy will be sent to any school to which the child subsequently transfers.

If the Social Services inform the school that a child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, a record of this fact and associated documentation from the Social Services will be maintained on the child's file while he or she continues to attend our school.

When the child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register then all Social Services records will be destroyed and only the school records retained for permanent preservation. Should a child transfer to another school whilst their name is on the Child Protection Register then we will inform the receiving school that his/her name is on the Register and the name of the child's Social Worker will be forwarded as well. All Social Services records held by us in relation to the child will then be destroyed. The schools own child protection records in relation to the child will be held in secure and confidential storage for permanent preservation.

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#### **8. SAFE RECRUITMENT & VETTING PROCEDURES**

Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals' access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system and schools must ensure that all persons on school property are vetted, inducted and supervised as appropriate. All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in **Sion Mills PS** are vetted /risk assessed/ supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

#### **9. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF PAID OR UNPAID**

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the child and young people in their charge must be above reproach. The school has a code of conduct for staff which is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. All members of staff are expected to comply with the school's Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers which has been approved by the Board of Governors.

*The school's code of conduct is included as Appendix 3*

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### STAFF TRAINING

Sion Mills Primary School is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on Policy and procedures with some members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their role and responsibilities. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and refresher training. The Principal/Designated Teacher; Deputy Designated Teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school Child Protection Policy and code of conduct and given a copy of the policy which includes what to do if you are worried that a child is being abused.

### 10. THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM

*The statutory personal development curriculum requires schools to give specific attention to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers a medium to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours.* Our school seeks to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resiliencies of children so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations.

There is a wide variety of lessons and activities on-going and these link in to the NI Curriculum statutory requirements for Personal Development and Mutual Understanding.

In the classroom, regular PDMU, PATHS, Rights Respecting School and Circle Time sessions are used as a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self-confidence, respect and sensitivity among classmates. Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues eg school visitors e.g. fire fighters, police etc. Parenting NI and Families Together parenting programmes. as is safe use of the Internet and discussion of the Golden Rules. These encourage children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self-confidence, respect and sensitivity among classmates. Our whole school assemblies are often given over to pastoral care themes. For example, classes have given us ideas for spreading kindness, what bullying behaviour is and how to deal with it. Pupils may undertake programmes delivered by external agencies eg "Helping Hands" programme run by Women's Aid. There is a Relationships and Sex Education programme for P1 – P7 for pupils. After school sessions in Mindfulness have been provided for some pupils through Extended Schools.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are also addressed through class assemblies and there is a permanent child protection notice board in the main corridor and relevant information in each resource area, which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers. A flow diagram of how a parent may make a complaint is also on display. An enlarged flow diagram for a teacher allegation is in the school staff room.

#### **11. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Sion Mills Primary School Safeguarding Team will review this policy annually and it will be approved every 2 years by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. This on-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

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.

Date Policy Reviewed: Nov. 2020



## Appendix 1

### Specific Types of Abuse

**Grooming** of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child's/young person's loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify. If the staff in Sion Mills PS become aware of signs that may indicate grooming they will take early action and follow the school's child protection policies and procedures.

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE)** is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017)

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible 'rewards' OR 'benefits' such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging.

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. The abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis.

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the school's child protection policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

**Domestic and Sexual violence and abuse** can have a profoundly negative effect on a child's emotional, psychological and social well-being. A child does not have to witness

domestic violence to be adversely affected by it. Living in a violent or abusive domestic environment is harmful to children.

Domestic violence and abuse is defined as 'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.' Sexual Violence and Abuse is defined as 'any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual /online perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).' (Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland A Seven Year Strategy: March 2016).

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

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. FGM is a form of child abuse and, as such, teachers have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, through agreed established procedures set out in our school policy.

**Forced Marriage** A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in Sion Mills PS we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

### **Children who display harmful sexualised behaviour**

Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child's development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. As a school we support children and young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships. Teachers are often therefore in a good position to consider if behaviour is within the normal continuum or otherwise.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as 'healthy', 'problematic' or 'sexually harmful'. Healthy sexual behaviour will normally have no need for intervention, however consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting. Problematic sexual behaviour requires some



level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. For example, a one-off incident may simply require liaising with parents on setting clear direction that the behaviour is unacceptable, explaining boundaries and providing information and education. Alternatively, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the EA CPSS may be required. We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2016/05 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

### **What is Harmful Sexualised Behaviour?**

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

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

Sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the school's positive behaviour policy but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

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

### **E safety/Internet abuse**

Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, social environments and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

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

- **Content risks:** the child or young person is exposed to harmful material.
- **Contact risks:** the child or young person participates in adult initiated online activity.
- **Conduct risks:** the child or young person is a perpetrator or victim in peer-to-peer exchange.

- **Commercial risks:** the child or young person is exposed to inappropriate commercial advertising, marketing schemes or hidden costs.

We in Sion Mills PS have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of pupils accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The school's actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the pupils in the school or on school-organised activities.

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

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

If a young person has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures of the school will be followed.

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## Appendix 2

### Types of Abuse and Physical/Behavioural Indicators

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

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Looks very thin, poorly and sad; constant hunger; lack of energy; untreated medical problems; special needs of child not being met; constant tiredness; inappropriate dress; poor hygiene; repeatedly unwashed; smelly; repeated accidents, especially burns.	Tired or listless (falls asleep in class); steals food; compulsive eating; begging from class friends; withdrawn; lacks concentration; misses school medicals; reports that there is no carer at home; low self-esteem; persistent non-attendance at school; exposure to violence including unsuitable videos.

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

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Unexplained bruises – in various stages of healing grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations or abrasions; untreated injuries; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday	Self destructive tendencies; aggression to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; improbable excuses to explain injuries; chronic runaway; uncomfortable with physical contact; coming to school early or staying last as if afraid to be at home; clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories

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

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Well below average in height and weight; "failing to thrive"; poor hair and skin; alopecia; swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet; recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; sudden speech disorders; signs of self mutilation; signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness); extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).	Apathy and dejection; inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations; rocking/head banging; inability to play; indifference to separation from family indiscriminate attachment; reluctance for parental liaison; fear of new situation; chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour; poor peer relationships.



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

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs; bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas; torn, stained or bloody underclothes; chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches; difficulty in walking or sitting; frequent urinary infections; avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers; unexplained pregnancies where the identity of the father is vague; anorexia/gross over-eating.	What the child tells you; Withdrawn; chronic depression; excessive sexual precociousness; seductiveness; children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal; over concerned for siblings; poor self esteem; self devaluation; lack of confidence; peer problems; lack of involvement; massive weight change; suicide attempts (especially adolescents); hysterical/angry outbursts; lack of emotional control; sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour; inappropriate sex play; repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories; vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; exposure to pornographic material.

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

#### Child Abuse in Other Specific Circumstances

##### **Bullying**

Bullying is not defined as a category of abuse within the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005). The policy does however state that the damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children and at the extreme cause them significant harm (including self harm).

The procedure for referral and investigation of abuse may therefore be implemented in certain circumstances such as when anti-bullying procedures have failed to be effective; bullying is persistent and severe, resulting in the victim suffering/likely to suffer significant harm; there are concerns that the bullying behaviour is indicative of the bully suffering/likely to suffer significant harm or where concerns exist in relation to the parents/carer's capacity to meet the needs of the child (either victim or bully).

### **Children Who Sexually Abuse Others or Display Sexually Harmful Behaviour**

When abuse of a child is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the procedures outlined in section 7 of this policy will be followed. It is important in such situations to distinguish between behaviours which are experimental in nature and those that are exploitative and harmful. Advice and support will be sought in such circumstances from the Education Authority's Designated Officer for Child Protection and where appropriate a referral made to the statutory agencies. In all such cases a risk assessment will be undertaken and an individual support and safety plan identified. Appropriate services will also be provided for the children involved.

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### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

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**"Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse."**

(SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible 'rewards' OR 'benefits' such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging.

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. The abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis.

The potential indicators of CSE can include, but are not limited to:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phone etc without plausible explanation;
- Leaving home/care without permission;
- Persistently going missing or returning late;
- Receiving lots of texts/phone calls prior to leaving;
- Agitated/stressed prior to leaving home/care;
- Returning distraught/ dishevelled or under the influence of substances;
- Truancy from school;
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age;
- Physical symptoms or infections e.g. bruising, bite marks, sexually transmitted infections;
- Concerning use of the internet;



- Entering or leaving cars driven by unknown adults or by taxis;
- New peer groups;
- Significantly older 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend';
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours;
- Low self-esteem;
- Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less);
- Self harm and other expressions of despair;
- Evidence or suspicion of substance misuse.

Whilst these indicators can be usefully used to identify potential risk, it is important to note that their presence does not necessarily mean that CSE is occurring. More importantly, nor does their absence, mean that it is not.

When we become aware of young people below the age of consent engaging in sexual activity (Post-primary only) or, where we have concerns about a 16/17 year old in a sexual relationship the Designated Teacher has a duty to follow appropriate procedures and where necessary make a referral to Social Services.

### **Indecent Photographs**

The offence of taking indecent pictures of children under 18 years can apply in a situation where a pupil has taken an indecent picture using a mobile phone of others under 18 years of age. It is also an offence to distribute, possess with intent to distribute or show such photographs to others. In such circumstances the PSNI and Social Services will be contacted. The school also has an e-safety/ mobile phone and electronic devices (or similarly named policies) which has/have been circulated to parents and pupils and which is available from the school.

### **Young Person whose Behaviour places him/her at Risk of Significant Harm**

A child whose own behaviours e.g. self-harming behaviour, leaving school without permission etc. places him/her at risk of significant harm, may not necessarily constitute abuse as defined in Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005). The decision to initiate child protection procedures is a matter for professional judgement and each case will be considered individually with advice sought from the Education Authority's Designated Officer for Child Protection. The criminal aspects of such cases will be dealt with by the PSNI.

### **Domestic Abuse**

The definition of domestic abuse is:

*"threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation".*

DHSSPS / NIO Tackling Violence at Home, 2005, p10

A child may live in a family where there is domestic abuse or a young person may be in a relationship where they become the subject of domestic abuse. In high risk cases involving domestic abuse Social Services and/or the Education Authority's Designated Officer for Child Protection will contact the school in order to help assess the child/young person's needs and to ensure that he/she is receives appropriate support.

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## **Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

- **Children with a disability**

Children and young people with disabilities (i.e. any child or young person who has a physical, sensory or learning impairment or a significant health condition) may be more vulnerable to abuse and those working with children with disabilities should be aware of any vulnerability factors associated with risk of harm, and any emerging child protection issues.

Staff must be aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult. Staff and volunteers working with children with disabilities will receive training to enable them to identify and refer concerns early in order to allow preventative action to be taken.

- **Children with limited fluency in English**

As with children with a special educational need, children who are not fluent in English should be given the chance to express themselves to a member of staff or other professional with appropriate language/communication skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred.

Designated Teachers should work with their SEN co-ordinators along with school staff with responsibility for newcomer pupils, seeking advice from the EA's Inclusion and Diversity Service to identify and respond to any particular communication needs that a child may have. All schools should try to create an atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or pupils for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them.

- **Pre-school provision**

Many of the issues in the preceding paragraphs will be relevant to our young children who may have limited communication skills. In addition to the above, staff will follow our Intimate Care policy and procedures in consultation with the child's parent[s]/carer[s]

- **Looked After Children**

In consultation with other agencies and professionals, a Health and Social Care Trust may determine that a child or young person's welfare cannot be safeguarded if they remain at home. In these circumstances, a child may be accommodated through a voluntary arrangement with the persons with parental responsibility for the child or the HSCT may make an application to the Court for a Care Order to place the child or

young person in an alternative placement provided by the Trust. The HSCT will then make arrangements for the child to be looked after, either permanently or temporarily. It is important that the views of children, young people and their parents and/or others with parental responsibility for the looked child are taken into account when decisions are made.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



children and young people in the family is promoted and they are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

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

- **Gender identity issues and sexual orientation**

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

As a staff working with young people from the LGBT community we will support them to appropriately access information and support on healthy relationships and to report any concerns or risks of abuse or exploitation.

- **Work experience, school trips and educational visits**

Our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people also includes periods when they are in our care outside of the school setting. We will follow DE guidance on educational visits, school trips and work experience to ensure our current safeguarding policies are adhered to and that appropriate staffing levels are in place.

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

- **Peer Abuse**

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

- **Self-Harm**

Self-harm encompasses a wide range of behaviours and things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way, which are damaging. It may indicate



a temporary period of emotional pain or distress, or deeper mental health issues which may result in the development of a progressive pattern of worsening self-harm that may ultimately result in death by misadventure or suicide. Self-harm may involve abuse of substances such as alcohol or drugs, including both illegal and/or prescribed drugs.

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

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- **Suicidal Ideation**

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

## Appendix 3

### Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers

#### Introduction

This Code of Conduct is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is built on the premise that staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the children and young people in their charge must be above reproach. However, it is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff.

#### Code of Conduct

##### Private meetings with pupils.

- a. Staff should be aware of the possible misconceptions or potential risks which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that in the normal course of school life there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- b. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. While it may be appropriate to use a sign indicating that the room is in use it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- c. If a member of staff has concerns that a private interview with a pupil may be misinterpreted or may give rise to concern he or she should ensure that another adult (or if this is not possible another pupil) is present or near by.
- d. Staff should be mindful of the potential risks involved in the use of social networking sites accessed by pupils.

##### Physical contact with pupils.

- a. As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- b. It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- c. Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- d. Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

- e. Staff who need to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.
  - f. Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
  - g. Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Vice-Principal (Pastoral).
  - h. Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.
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#### **Choice and Use of Teaching Material**

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

#### **Relationships and Attitudes**

Staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

#### **E-Safety and Internet Use**

- a. Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the schools' E-Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy at all times.
- b. Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute. Staff should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.
- c. Staff should exercise caution in their use of all social media or any other web based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts established by others.
- d. Contact with students should only made via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment when appropriate.



- e. Photographs/stills or video footage of students should only be taken using school equipment, for purposes authorised by the school. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental consent has been given. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be stored in accordance with the school's procedures on school equipment.

### Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur. It is therefore important that staff exercise judgement and seek advice if unsure about a situation. From time to time, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young people, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions.

## Procedures for Parents or Carers who wish to raise a Child Protection Concern

I have a concern about my/a child's safety



I can talk to the class teacher



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection **Mrs Kee** or to the Principal **Mrs McNelis**



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors, **Mr Tom Bradley**



**At any time, I can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman**  
**Tel: 0800 343 424**



At any time, I can talk to  
*Children's Services Gateway Team (Western Trust)*  
**Tel: 028 7131 4090**  
Or  
*The PSNI Central Referral Unit*  
**Tel: 028 9025 9299**

## Appendix 4

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

Member of staff completes the Note of Concern on what has been observed or shared and must ACT PROMPTLY.

Source of concern is notified that the school will follow up appropriately on the issues raised.

Staff member discusses concerns with the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher in his/her absence and provides note of concern.

Designated Teacher should consult with the Principal or other relevant staff before deciding upon action to be taken, always taking care to avoid undue delay. If required, advice may be sought from a CPSS officer.

#### Child Protection referral is required

Designated Teacher seeks consent of the parent/carer and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm 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 referral form within 24 hours.

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

#### 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.



## Appendix 5

### Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff

#### Key Points

Lead individual learns of an allegation against a member of staff and informs the Chair/Vice Chair of BoG as appropriate.

#### Guidance on the Next Steps

Lead individual then establishes the facts, seeks advice from the key agencies as appropriate, usually through informal discussion.

#### Possible Outcomes

Following on from establishing the facts, seeking advice from Key Agencies and discussion with the Chair and/or BoG to agree a way forward from the options below.

Precautionary suspension is not appropriate and the matter is concluded.

Allegation addressed through relevant disciplinary procedures.

Precautionary suspension under Child Protection procedures imposed

Alternatives to precautionary suspension imposed

## Appendix 6

CONFIDENTIAL    Sion Mills PS

### NOTE OF CONCERN

#### CHILD PROTECTION RECORD - REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER

Name of Pupil:
Year Group:
Date, time of incident / disclosure:
Circumstances of incident / disclosure:
Nature and description of concern:
Parties involved, including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom:
Action taken at the time:

Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:

Any further action taken:

Written report passed to Designated Teacher:      Yes:      No:  
If 'No' state reason:

Date and time of report to the Designated Teacher:

Written note from staff member placed on pupil's Child Protection file

Yes      No

If 'No' state reason:

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

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

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



## Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers

### Introduction

This Code of Conduct is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is built on the premise that staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the children and young people in their charge must be above reproach. However, it is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff.

### Code of Conduct

#### Private meetings with pupils.

- a. Staff should be aware of the possible misconceptions or potential risks which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that in the normal course of school life there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- b. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. While it may be appropriate to use a sign indicating that the room is in use it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- c. If a member of staff has concerns that a private interview with a pupil may be misinterpreted or may give rise to concern he or she should ensure that another adult (or if this is not possible another pupil) is present or near by.
- d. Staff should be mindful of the potential risks involved in the use of social networking sites accessed by pupils.

#### Physical contact with pupils.

- a. As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- b. It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- c. Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- d. Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

- e. Staff who need to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.
- f. Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- g. Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Vice-Principal (Pastoral).
- h. Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

#### **Choice and Use of Teaching Material**

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

#### **Relationships and Attitudes**

Staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

#### **E-Safety and Internet Use**

- a. Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the schools' E-Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy at all times.
- b. Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute. Staff should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.
- c. Staff should exercise caution in their use of all social media or any other web based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts established by others.
- d. Contact with students should only be made via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment when appropriate.

- e. Photographs/stills or video footage of students should only be taken using school equipment, for purposes authorised by the school. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental consent has been given. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be stored in accordance with the school's procedures on school equipment.

### **Conclusion**

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur. It is therefore important that staff exercise judgement and seek advice if unsure about a situation. From time to time, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young people, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions.





## Annex to Child Protection Policy COVID-19 changes to our Child Protection Policy

### **Response to COVID-19**

There have been significant changes within our setting in response to the outbreak and the uncertainty of Education Restart

Despite the changes, Sion Mills Primary School Child Protection Policy is fundamentally the same: **children and young people always come first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and contact the DT in line with our established safeguarding procedure.**

This annex sets out some of the adjustments we are making in line with the changed arrangements in the school and following advice from government and local agencies.

### **Reporting arrangements remain unchanged**

The school arrangements continue in line with our child protection policy.

The Designated Teacher (DT) is Mrs W Kee

The Deputy Designated Teachers (DDT) are: Mrs O McNelis, Mrs G McAleer and Miss Catherine McGeady

The school's approach ensures the DT or a deputy is always on site while the school is open. In the unusual circumstance this is not possible the DT or DDT will be contactable and the Principal or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will email all staff by 9am to advise they are acting in an on-site safeguarding role together with contact details for the DT or Deputy DT.

Staff will continue to follow the Child Protection procedure and advise the safeguarding leads immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in school or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards. Children's services may be affected by the impact of the virus on staff and an increased demand for services. Where a child is at risk of significant harm there may be a need to be persistent in referring concerns to Social Services. The arrangements for contacting Gateway remain the same.

Should a child in the school's view be at risk of significant harm and local agencies are not able to respond, the school will immediately follow the safeguarding children partnership escalation procedure

### **Identifying vulnerability**

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/new-vulnerable-children-guidance-published-schools-and-parents>

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During Lockdown many families were assisted by the school or local community and this will continue for as long as required.

### **Staff will be aware of increased risk**

The pressures on children and their families at this time are significant. There will be heightened awareness of family pressures through being contained in a small area, poverty, and financial or health anxiety. These areas should be considered in the setting of any work for children to undertake at home (including recognising the impact of online learning – see below). Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DT about any concerns.

### **Peer on peer abuse**

We recognise the potential for abuse to go on between young people, especially in the context of a school closure or partial closure. Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer-on-peer abuse, including those between young people who are not currently attending our provision. Extra care should be taken where groups have mixed age, developmental stages, are attending other schools as an interim measure and similar. When making contact with these families our staff will ask about relationships between learners.

### **Risk online**

Young people will be using the internet more during this period. The school may also use online approaches to deliver training or support. Staff will be aware of the signs and signals of cyberbullying and other risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when children were learning at the school.

- The school continues to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place
- The school will review arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate
- The school has taken on board guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning and guidance for safer working practice from the Safer Recruitment Consortium. We have reviewed the code of conduct and information sharing policy accordingly.
- Staff have discussed the risk that professional boundaries could slip during this exceptional period and been reminded of the school's code of conduct and importance of using school systems to communicate with children and their families.
- Children and young people accessing remote learning receive guidance on keeping safe online and know how to raise concerns with the school, Childline, the UK Safer Internet Centre and CEOP.
- Parents and carers have received information about keeping children safe online with peers, the school, other education offers they may access and the wider internet community. We have set out the school's approach, including the sites children may be asked to access and set out who from the school (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online. Parents have been offered the following links:
  - Internet matters - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
  - Net-aware - for support for parents and careers from the NSPCC
  - Parent info - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online

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- Thinkuknow - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- UK Safer Internet Centre - advice for parents and carers
- Free additional support for staff in responding to online safety issues can be accessed from the Professionals Online Safety Helpline at the UK Safer Internet Centre.

### **Allegations or concerns about staff**

With such different arrangements young people could be at greater risk of abuse from staff or volunteers. We remind all staff to maintain the view that 'it could happen here' and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the safeguarding team.

Any staff or volunteers from outside our setting will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of the risks and know how to take action if they are concerned.

### **New staff or volunteers**

New starters must have an induction before starting or on their first morning with the Principal or DT. They must read the school child protection policy, the behaviour policy, the whistleblowing policy and the code of conduct. The Principal or DT will ensure new recruits know who to contact if worried about a child and ensure the new starters are familiar with the child protection procedure.

### **New children at the school**

Where children join our school from other settings we will require confirmation from the Principal whether they have a Safeguarding File or SEN statement. This file must be provided securely **before** the child begins at our school and a call made from our school to the placing school's DT to discuss how best to keep the child safe. In some unusual circumstance this may not be possible. Information provided must include contact details for any appointed social worker. Safeguarding information about children placed in our school will be recorded on our safeguarding system, will be securely copied to the placing school DT and will be securely returned to the placing school on completion of the child's placement with us so there is a continuous safeguarding record for the child.

The DT will undertake a risk assessment in respect of any new information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know about the information. This will be recorded on our safeguarding recording system.

This policy has been remotely approved by Governors on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 and is available on the school website at [www.sionmillps.com](http://www.sionmillps.com).



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