

**St Colmcille's Nursery School**  
**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**  
Updated September 2025

“It is the policy of St Colmcilles Nursery School to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm.”

The fundamental principle in our child protection policy is that the welfare, care safety of the child must always be our paramount consideration, adhering to the provisions of The Children (NI) Order 1995.

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks. Our policy and procedures on child protection are designated to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school – teachers, nonteaching staff, volunteers – has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected.

**Definition of Abuse:**

**Neglect:** the actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from the exposure of any kind of danger, including cold and starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

**Physical Abuse:** actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury of suffering to a child.

**Sexual Abuse:** actual or likely exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or violate social taboos of family rules.

**Emotional Abuse:** actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment. This is where it is the main or only form of abuse.

The policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school. The main elements of the policy are:

- Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with young children.
- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe.

- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases or suspected of abuse
- Supporting children who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan.
- Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

### Child Exploitation:

This is defined as, “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 nor situation for personal gain. “ (Co-operating to safeguard children and Young people in Northern Ireland, August 2017). It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

We recognise that because of the day-to-day contact with children, school staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The school will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.
- Ensure that there are adults in the school who they can approach if they are worried.
- Include opportunities in the Personal, Social and Emotional Curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.

We will follow the procedures set out in the Regional Policy and Procedures document (2005) and take account of guidance issued by the Department of Education and CCMS to:

- Make sure we have a designated teacher for child protection who has received appropriate training and support for this role.
- Ensure we have a nominated governor responsible for child protection.
- Ensure every member of staff (including temporary and supply staff and volunteers) and the governing body know the name of the designated teacher responsible for child protection and knows their role.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to signs of abuse and the responsibility of referring any concerns to the designated teacher for child protection.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations in the school prospectus.

- Develop links with relevant agencies and cooperate as required with their inquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.
- Keep written records of concerns about children even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately.
- Ensure that all records are kept securely, separate from the main pupil file and in locked locations.
- Develop, then follow, procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or a volunteer.
- Make sure recruitment practices are always followed.

We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They may feel helpless, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable environment in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. The school will endeavour to support the pupil through the following:

- The content of the curriculum.
- The school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives the pupils a sense of being valued.
- The school behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils.
- The school will ensure that the pupil knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but that they are valued and not blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as Social Services, Health Services, Education Welfare and the Educational Psychology Service.
- Ensuring that where a pupil on the child protection register leaves, their information is transferred to the designated teacher in the new school and that the child's social worker is informed.

As a condition of employment all staff have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staff of our school have also adopted a code of practice for our behaviour towards pupils, with reference to changing children. This is detailed at the end of the policy.

#### Procedures for reporting suspected or disclosed abuse.

The designated teacher for child protection in this school is:  
**Mrs. Emer Cassidy Principal**

In her absence the deputy designated teacher **Mrs Sue Mc Laughlin** teacher will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

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 a child, the member of staff will act promptly.

- He/She will not investigate - this is a matter for Social Services - but will report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with her and make full notes.
- The designated teacher will, as a matter of urgency, plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is made. She will then decide whether, in the best interest of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services.
- **If there are any concerns that the child may be at risk the school is obliged to make a referral.**
- Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.
- The Principal may seek clarification or advice by consulting one of the Designated Officers for Child Protection within SEELB, CCMS or the Senior Social Worker 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.
- The safety of the child is our first priority.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse the Principal will inform:

- Social Services
- SEELB Designated Officer for Child Protection.
- CCMS Designated Officer for Child Protection.

This will all be done in an envelope marked **“Confidential - Child Protection”**

### Complaints about Staff

If a complaint of possible abuse is made about a member of staff the Principal/designated teacher (Mrs Cassidy) must be informed immediately. The same procedures as before will apply.

Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils and may be suspended from duty pending an investigation by Social Services.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors (Mr. Patsy Fitzsimons) will be informed immediately.

If a complaint against the Principal /designated teacher, then the deputy designated teacher (Mrs McLaughlin) must be informed. She will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors (Mr. Patsy Fitzsimons) and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However only those who need to know will be told.

The person making the complaint or giving information will be advised as soon as possible by the Principal about whether or not the complaint has been referred to an investigating agency.

### Staff Code of Conduct

Staff should be mindful of the fact that they are in a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the children in their charge should be above reproach.

- If staff are working on a one-to-one basis with a child, then this should take place either in a room with visual access or with the door open.
- As a general rule staff are advised not to make physical contact with pupils
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary to suggest that staff should touch children only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child may need reassurance involving physical contact, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this. Neither should staff attempt to stifle the natural affection of Nursery age children but should direct it into an appropriate display.
- 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. (DENI Circular 1999/9: Article 4 Education (NI) Order 1998.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Staff who have to administer first aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or staff.
- Any physical contact that would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or casual observer should be avoided.
- The special procedures listed below regarding changing a child who is wet/dirty or sick should be adhered to by all staff.

With special reference to changing children who are wet/ dirty or sick the following procedures should be followed:

- Only children whose parents have given permission for staff to change them may be changed. The parent/carer of those for whom consent has not been received should be telephoned instead. A list of children who may not be changed by staff will be clearly sited for staff to check.
- Due to problems of supervision of the rest of the class, both members of staff will not be present when a child is being changed. However, the member of staff

changing the child must alert the other member of staff prior to changing the child.

- To provide visual access, the toilet door must be kept open at all times.
- While every attempt should be made to give the child privacy and preserve their dignity, other children will not be barred from the toilet area during changing.
- Staff must wear disposal gloves while changing a child.
- The children should be encouraged to remove the clothes to be changed by themselves where possible.
- Where necessary the children may be given a non allergenic baby wipe to freshen themselves.
- The children should be encouraged to dress themselves with help being given when necessary.
- A note of the change should be entered on the changing chart and signed and dated by the staff member. Wet/soiled clothes should be placed in a bag in the child's drawer or on his/her hanger as the case may be. The child's carer must be informed at the end of the school day.
- A child who is asking for help should be encouraged and directed how to clean themselves where possible. Where intervention is necessary the other member of staff should be alerted, and the record sheet signed by the staff member on completion.

Adopted by the Board of Governors on (date) 20-10-25

Signed *P. Flynn* (chair of BOG)