

## School Safeguarding Ethos

**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.

(Co- operating To Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2016)

Therefore the school's policy for child protection must start from this principle. The staff of Convent of Mercy Nursery School will do everything in their power to protect the children in their care. To support this, our approach to child protection is based on current Education Authority training for the Designated and Deputy Designated teachers, DE Circulars regarding Child Protection and Safeguarding - in particular 1999/10, 2015/13, 2016/20 and information from CCMS.

## What is child abuse?

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger.

### Harm/Abuse

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.

(Ref: 2.6, Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, March 2016)

There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or another with a duty of care towards a child.

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect
- Exploitation

**Physical Abuse** is deliberately hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain 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.

**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, engaging 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.

### Signs and Symptoms

#### Neglect

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Constant hunger</li> <li>▪ Exposed to danger; lack of supervision</li> <li>▪ Inadequate / inappropriate clothing</li> <li>▪ Poor hygiene</li> <li>▪ Untreated illnesses</li> <li>▪ Persistent tiredness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Listlessness</li> <li>▪ Lack of peer relationships</li> <li>▪ Low self-esteem</li> <li>▪ Compulsive stealing / begging</li> </ul>

#### LONGTERM EFFECTS

- **Severe neglect** of young children has adverse effects on children's ability to form **attachments** and is associated with major impairment of growth and intellectual development.
- **Ongoing neglect** can lead to serious impairment of health and development, and long term difficulty with social functioning, relationships and educational progress. Neglected children may also experience low self-esteem, feelings of being unloved and isolated. Neglect can also result, in extreme cases, in death.

**The impact of neglect varies depending on**

- how long children have been neglected,
- the children's age, and
- the multiplicity of neglectful behaviours children have been experiencing.
- Active and passive

Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to interagency working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children. March 2010. DCSF

## Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Scratches</li><li>▪ Bite marks or welts</li><li>▪ Bruises in places difficult to mark (behind ears, groin)</li><li>▪ Burns</li><li>▪ Untreated injuries</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Self mutilation tendencies</li><li>▪ Chronic runaway</li><li>▪ Aggressive or withdrawn</li><li>▪ Fear of returning home</li><li>▪ Undue fear of adults</li><li>▪ Fearful watchfulness</li></ul>

- Physical abuse can lead directly to neurological damage, physical injuries, disability, or at the extreme end, death.
- Harm may be caused to children both by **the abuse itself** and by **the abuse taking place in a wider family or institutional context of conflict and aggression**, including inappropriate or inexpert use of physical restraint.
- **Physical abuse** has been linked to aggressive behaviour in children, emotional and behavioural difficulties and educational difficulties where violence is pervasive
- **The physical abuse of children frequently co-exists with domestic violence.**

**Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to interagency working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children. March 2010. DCSF**

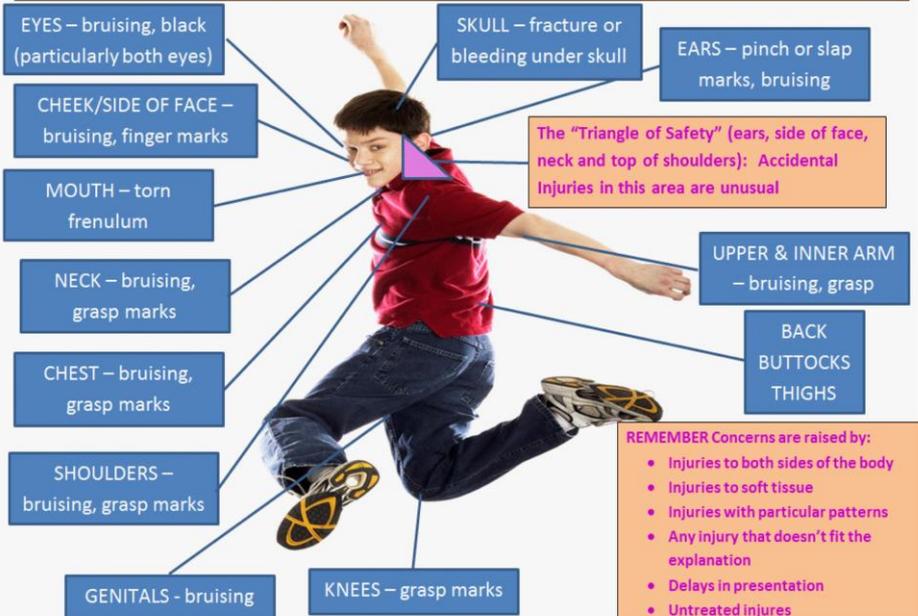
## Common Sites For Accidental Injury



**REMEMBER** Accidental injuries typically:

- Involve bony prominences
- Match the history
- Are in keeping with the development of the child

## Common Sites For Non-Accidental Physical Injury



The "Triangle of Safety" (ears, side of face, neck and top of shoulders): Accidental injuries in this area are unusual

**REMEMBER** Concerns are raised by:

- Injuries to both sides of the body
- Injuries to soft tissue
- Injuries with particular patterns
- Any injury that doesn't fit the explanation
- Delays in presentation
- Untreated injuries

## Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Soreness, bleeding in genital or anal areas</li> <li>▪ Itching in genital areas</li> <li>▪ Stained or bloody underwear</li> <li>▪ Stomach pains or headaches</li> <li>▪ Pain on urination</li> <li>▪ Difficulty in walking or sitting</li> <li>▪ Bruises on inner thighs or buttocks</li> <li>▪ Anorexic / bulimic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chronic depression</li> <li>▪ Inappropriate language, sexual knowledge for age group</li> <li>▪ Making sexual advances to adults or other children</li> <li>▪ Low self esteem</li> <li>▪ Afraid of the dark</li> <li>▪ Wariness of being approached by anyone</li> <li>▪ Evidence of substance misuse</li> <li>▪ Acquisition of money, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation</li> <li>▪ Association with older people, particularly men, outside the usual range of contacts</li> <li>▪ Phone calls/messages from adults outside the normal range of contacts</li> </ul>

- Disturbed behaviour - including self harm, inappropriate sexualised behaviour, depression and a loss of self-esteem - have all been linked to sexual abuse.
- Its adverse effects may endure into adulthood.
- The severity of impact on a child is believed to increase the longer the abuse continues, the more extensive the abuse, and the older the child.
- A number of features of sexual abuse have also been linked with severity of impact, including the relationship of the abuser to the child, the extent of premeditation, the degree of threat and coercion, sadism, bizarre or unusual elements.

**A child's ability to cope** with the experience of sexual abuse, once recognised or disclosed, is strengthened by the support of a nonabusive adult carer who believes the child, helps the child understand the abuse, and is able to cope with what has happened, and his or her feelings of self worth

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## Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sudden speech disorders</li><li>▪ Wetting and soiling</li><li>▪ Signs of mutilation</li><li>▪ Frequent vomiting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Rocking, thumb sucking</li><li>▪ Fear of change</li><li>▪ Chronic runaway</li><li>▪ Poor peer relationships</li><li>▪ Attention seeking behaviour</li></ul>

Importance of recognising behaviour as a means of communication

### LONGTERM EFFECTS

- There is increasing evidence of the adverse long-term consequences for children's development where they have been subjected to **sustained emotional abuse**, including the impact of serious bullying.
- Emotional abuse has an **important impact** on a developing child's mental health, behaviour and self-esteem.
- **It can be especially damaging in infancy.**
- Underlying emotional abuse may be as important, if not more so, than other visible forms of abuse in terms of its impact on the child. Domestic violence is abusive in itself.
- Adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse **may be features** in families where children are exposed to such abuse.

Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to interagency working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children. March 2010. DCSF

## Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status..

Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point

"Co- operating To Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland"

(DHSSPS 2016)

## Confidentiality

Information regarding Child Protection issues and concerns will be treated in the upmost confidence. The Designated teacher and Deputy Designated will ensure that concerns are recorded within 24 hours using the Note of Concern or Contact Log. The information gather will be stored in the Child Protection File which is stored in a lock unit.

Depending on the concern or current situation procedure will be followed to identify the next step - for example contacting the Child Protection team at the Education Authority or Social Service. A possible UNOCINI referral or seeking support from the Family Hub.

Only the designated and deputy designated teachers have access to these files. Depending on the concern parents will be informed immediately if not regarding them. ETI are not allowed access yet can be informed of the number of children on the Child Protection register.

## Sharing Information within the School

Child Protection information is confidential and often highly sensitive and decisions to share, or not to share, must always be made in the interest of protecting the child if at risk of significant harm. There is also a duty to protect individuals and, as such, within a school information should only be shared with staff who require access to it, in order to work in a safe and informed way with the child and family. The Designated Teacher should record who information is shared with, when, and the reasons for this. All staff should understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the consequences of any breach. Staff must always consider the safety and welfare of the child when making decisions about whether to share confidential information - therefore core staff maybe informed if concerns regarding the supervision of outdoor play areas and collection of children at home time.

## Safeguarding Team

The safeguarding team is made up of:

Sinead Donoghue - Principal & Designated Teacher

Olivia McCoy - Deputy Designated Teacher

Siobhan Slavin - Chair of Board of Governors & Designated Governor for Child Protection

## Vetting Procedures

All staff and students are vetted before taking up duties in the school. However if an emergency position has to be filled, the person filling the post will have limited duties - will be supervised at all times, will not change or clean a child yet can be the witness for other staff carrying out these roles.

If work experience students are on placement they are still regarded as a child and don't require an Access NI check for one weeks work placement - however they will never be left unsupervised.

It is also the policy of the school to enhance our curriculum by inviting parents/people from the community to talk to the children about their work. In the event of parents/visitors/students visiting the school/classroom, the class teacher/nursery assistant will always be present in the classroom. If a parent volunteers to check story sacks they would not have access to the children and there will be no need for vetting as this is carried out in the staffroom. A member of staff will also be present when children are having their photographs taken with the school photographer. Yet if to work with the children to care for the garden or to gain experience within the Nursery then an Access NI form would be completed.

### Child Protection Procedures

#### Reporting to Board of Governors

It is best practice that Child Protection is a standing agenda item for Board of Governor meetings and that the Designated Teacher prepares a report for the meeting of all child protection activities and a full annual report for the Board of Governors on all Child Protection matters. The annual report should include information such as what child protection training has been provided for staff/volunteers, statistics in relation to child protection concerns e.g. the number of referrals to Social Services and number of children on the child protection register, the number of complaints against staff, any safeguarding/child protection initiatives delivered as part of the schools preventative curriculum, policy reviews undertaken. All reports must be anonymised in keeping with the principle of confidentiality.

The school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints should be made available to the Board of Governors at least annually. If an allegation is recorded anonymised information will be shared with Governors including what action was taken and the outcome of the complaint. The Chair should sign and date the Record of Child Abuse Complaints annually; even if there have been no entries. The Education Training Inspectorate will ask to see the Record and Chair's signature during inspections, but not the content or detail of complaints.

#### Staff Training

Staff receive annual training in Child Protection regarding detailed procedures that are in place for identifying and reporting suspected or alleged abuse and for ensuring the children's safety in the Nursery School. The procedures include action to ensure that children, who display the potential for bullying behaviour, receive appropriate support and that other children who may be threatened by this behaviour are safeguarded. That the Principal, Miss Donoghue is the designated person for Child Protection. She is responsible for co-ordinating action and reporting all disclosures, suspicions and allegations. Staff are aware of what action to take should a child make a disclosure (or partial disclosure) if a member of staff becomes suspicious of abuse, or a parent or other person raises a concern or makes an allegation. The deputy designated teacher is Mrs McCoy. Should a member of staff be the subject of a complaint or suspicion - the designated person/deputy designated person are aware of the procedures to follow.

The Designated and Deputy Designated teachers for Child Protection attend regular training to ensure they are up to date with legislation. The Nursery has regular on-going staff development on Child Protection to ensure that all staff understand what to do.

Board of Governors -and one member of the Board of Governors have had training on Child Protection (this member sits on the Interview Panel) and all members of the Board of Governors are aware of the School's Policy and Procedures

### Parents Informed

Parents are made aware of the Nursery's policy and procedures on Child Protection. This information is contained in the Parent's Booklet and copies of the policy are displayed in the hall. We hold a meeting with parents before their children start Nursery School, at this meeting we draw their attention to the information contained in the Parents Handbook and displayed on the parents' Notice-board. This includes precise information about how they can make known any concerns they have about their children's progress or treatment in the Nursery School. All Parents receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures at the October Meeting

### Staff Conduct

Consideration has been given to the conduct of staff re: changing children, including a written Code of Conduct. Staff have agreed their approach to ensuring that children are treated with respect and safeguarded from harm, including the aggressive behaviour of other children. They have agreed, and implemented, appropriate methods of behaviour management. In addition, staff have considered situations where children and staff are particularly vulnerable, such as toileting, changing children's clothing, collection at the end of the session, etc. We have clear, agreed methods to minimise any dangers to children or staff from these situations. Procedures have been set in place, which will protect the safety of the children as they enter and leave the Nursery unit, a member of staff will be positioned at each classroom door.

### Allegations Against A Staff Member

Allegations can be made in a number of different ways and from a variety of sources such as:

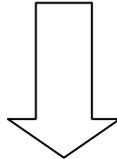
- In person, by correspondence, by phone, by electronic means such as social media, e-mail, twitter etc.
- From pupils, their parents/relative/guardian, a member of staff, a witness, social services, the police, the media, the Employing Authority, Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) or anonymously.

Allegations against a member of staff can include their alleged behaviour outside of their job/role, including in their own home or community, relating to children. Allegations can be made against Temporary and Substitute Teachers on the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register (NISTR) Allegations can also be historical, for example: where the person making the allegation has left the educational establishment or where the member of staff may have worked in another educational establishment.

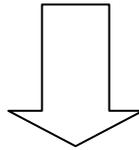
## Flowcharts

For a parent to make known their concerns or complain about the safety of their child /any child.

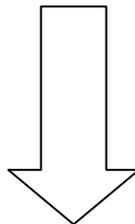
I have a concern about my / a child's safety  
I can speak to the class teacher



If I am still concerned I talk to the  
Miss Donoghue (Principal) the Designated teacher or  
Mrs McCoy Deputy Designated teacher  
for Child Protection about it



If I am still concerned I can talk or write to  
the Chairperson of the Board of Governors  
Siobhan Slavin



At any time I can talk to a social worker, the PSNI,  
EASER (Education Authority) or CCMS (Catholic  
Council for Maintained School)

## Operation Encompass (September 2021)

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

When the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day, to share this information with a member of the safeguarding school. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide direct or indirect support to this child and family.

This information will be treated like any other child protection information as per DE Circular 2020/07. It will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete the online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency.

## Preventative Curriculum

Together in the Park - Media Initiative

Pants Rule

Olivia McCoy -has been developing a programme to develop the children's and parents understanding of their rights through age appropriate stories and activities. (Book- The Rights of the Child)

## Record Keeping & Management /Transfer of Records

The Designated teacher and Deputy Designated will ensure that concerns are recorded within 24 hours using the Note of Concern or Contact Log. The information gather will be stored in the Child Protection File which is stored in a lock unit.

Depending on the concern or current situation procedure will be followed to identify the next step - for example contacting the Child Protection team at the Education Authority or Social Service. A possible UNOCINI referral or seeking support from the Family Hub. Both teachers will monitor any further comments, concerns and information from outside agencies - taking further action if necessary.

Records demanded by a court must be redacted to protect the identity of a third party. For this reason, and in the general interests of confidentiality, concerns about pupils should be recorded on an individual basis, rather than in a diary, or log, where several children's and staff names may appear on one page.

## Sharing Information with Others

The subject of the record, those with parental responsibility, or the pupil's guardian ad litem, i.e. an independent officer of the Court appointed under the Children (NI) Order 1995 to safeguard the interest of children who are the subject of Court proceedings, do have the right in law to request access to the records at any stage, subject to the exemptions under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Access to child protection records should be strictly on a need-to-know basis, and a record should be kept to identify who has requested access, when and for what purpose. Schools may wish to refer to guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) "Dealing with subject access request involving other people's information" <https://ico.org.uk/fororganisations/guide-to-data-protection/principle-6-rights/subject-access-request/>. Advice can also be sought from the Information Manager in the relevant Education Authority Region.

Information must always be shared with other agencies where there is a legal duty to do so e.g. PSNI and Social Services. It should, however, be noted that the PSNI have no automatic right to access data and must complete Form 81, stating the data they require and the specific case to which it relates.

Consent to share information should be sought where possible, however, sharing, even without consent, will normally be justified, if there is evidence of reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering harm. Ensure that the information shared is necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, and is shared securely.

#### Transfer:

Under the Education (Pupil Records and Reporting) (Transitional) Regulations (NI) 2007, Boards of Governors are required to make arrangements to transfer a formal record of a pupil's academic achievements, other skills and abilities and progress within 15 school days of a pupil transferring schools. The requirement does not include the transfer of child protection records. However, where there have been, or are current, concerns about a pupil the school should consider what information should be shared with the new school.

Transfer of Child Protection Records - Past safeguarding concerns and the response to these can be significant, should concerns arise for the child at a later time. The third data protection principle is key in relation to deciding whether to transfer past concerns. If the information, current or historical, is deemed to be relevant then it should be shared.

The Designated Teacher is responsible for ensuring that copies of relevant child protection records are transferred to the DT of the receiving school in the most secure and appropriate manner to minimise the risk of any data breach. The data controller, i.e. the school, is accountable for any data breach.

When a child on whom the school holds safeguarding or child protection information leaves the school and the school are unaware of the new school they must notify the Education Welfare Service at the Education Authority who will then attempt to locate the child. Social Services must be informed immediately if the child has a Child Protection Plan or is a Looked After Child. The school must retain the child's child protection records and forward the relevant information to the receiving school when the child has been traced.

When a child whose name is on the Child Protection Register changes school, the school which the child is leaving should inform the receiving school immediately that his/her name is on the Register and pass on contact details for the social worker. The school should then destroy all child protection records on the child supplied by Social Services, including records of case conferences, and should inform the child's Case Co-ordinator in Social Services. The remaining child protection record should be copied, as relevant, to the new school. When considering what information is relevant advice can be sought from the CPSSS. The school to which the child is transferring should contact the child's social worker for relevant information. The leaving school can retain original copies of their own documents.

It is good practice for the DT to discuss concerns directly with the DT from the receiving school in advance of sending the child protection record.

### Closure

When a pupil leaves the school or child protection concerns cease to be current or ongoing, and records cease to be of active use other than for reference purposes, the child's individual Child Protection File should be closed. The DT should consult the School's Disposal of Records Schedule, review the file and mark the front cover of the file indicating the date on which the file can be destroyed, for example, 30 years from the pupil's date of birth.

Closure, Retention and Disposal of Child Protection Records file simply means that no further papers can be added. If new concerns arise a new file can be opened and cross-referenced with the previous record.

### Retention of Child Protection Records

In order to determine how long child protection records should be kept there are a number of guiding principles. The Data Protection Act 1998 requires that personal information should be:

- Adequate, relevant and not excessive for the purpose(s) for which they are held (third principle)
- Accurate and where necessary kept up to date (fourth principle)
- Not kept for longer than is necessary for its purpose(s) (fifth principle)

The school is the Data Controller and the school has responsibility to ensure that the Act is complied with.

Every school must have a Record Retention and Destruction Policy and a Disposal of Records Schedule. Some key questions to be considered in developing a policy for child protection records are set out at Annex E.

The potential for historical allegations to be made should also be considered in determining retention periods for child protection records.

### Extended Schools / Neighbourhood Renewal

When working with outside agencies via Extended Schools or Neighbourhood Renewal funding it is principal's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate vetting has been carried out prior to the activity or support program beginning.

### Linked Policies

Changing Policy & Procedures

Staff training packs - Child Protection & Staff Handbook

Parents Handbook / Parents Presentation

Positive Behaviour

