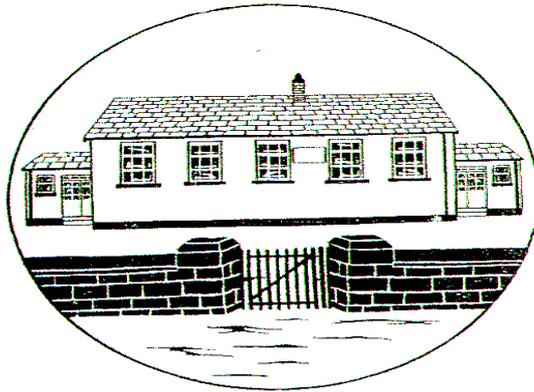




Creavery Primary School



Safeguarding our Children Policy

February 2010

CREAVERY PRIMARY SCHOOL

ETHOS STATEMENT

(Written collaboratively by the staff)

As a school family, in partnership with ancillary staff, parents and the wider community, we aim to provide;

- **a stimulating and caring environment where each child is valued as a unique individual**
- **an orderly yet relaxed atmosphere in which all of our pupils can reach their full academic potential**
- **nurturing of the personal and social skills, values and attitudes which will enable children to make a valuable contribution to the society in which they live**

The Children Order (Northern Ireland) 1995:

Every child has the right to protection from abuse and exploitation. To this effect, the staff of Creavery Primary School recognises its pastoral responsibility towards its pupils and the fundamental right of those pupils to be protected from harm. Since children cannot learn or develop effectively unless they profit from a secure, learning environment, "***the welfare of the child must always be the paramount consideration***".

Rationale for Implementing Whole School Procedures:

- It protects the child to the best of our ability
- It avoids delay
- It provides consistency
- It protects all staff
- It ensures that, if further action is taken by another agency, then the school has followed the protection procedures regarding possible abuse.

Aims and objectives:

- ✓ Care for the child
- ✓ Care for our school community
- ✓ Care for the community we serve
- ✓ To make staff aware of signs of abuse and know to whom they should report any concerns or suspicions;
- ✓ To establish a Designated Teacher within the school who with the Principal, has responsibility for coordinating action within the school and liaising with other external agencies;
- ✓ To implement procedures, of which all staff are aware, for handling suspected cases of abuse of pupils, including procedures to be followed if a member of staff is accused of abuse;
- ✓ To make parents aware of the school's Child Protection policy and the fact that this may require cases to be referred to the investigative agencies in the interests of the child.
- ✓ To provide guidance to parents, children and staff about obtaining suitable support where necessary.

1. General Issues:

As many recent high profile cases have shown, it is also essential that all the relevant agencies involved in child abuse co-operate together for the benefit of the child concerned.

Schools have a statutory responsibility to ensure that they have appropriate procedures in place for responding to all situations in which they believe that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse.

For the procedures to operate successfully in Creavery Primary School, it is important that all members of staff have total commitment to child protection in respecting our ethos (ref. Mission Statement) and by reporting any concerns they may have. Our designated person for Child Protection is **Miss Louise Dunwoody** while the deputy designated person is **Mrs Pauline Davison**.

Definitions and Categories of Abuse:

Child Abuse:

Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling, other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger, who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a

deliberate act or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both. This abuse may take a number of forms, including: *Neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.*

Physical Abuse:

Physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented e.g. bruises, particularly bruises of a regular shape, which may indicate the use of an implement.

Sexual Abuse:

The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend, and to which they are unable to give informed consent; or they violate the social taboos of family roles e.g. may exhibit physical signs or lead to substantial behavioural change, including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Neglect:

The persistent or severe neglect of a child which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive e.g. inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger;

Emotional Abuse:

This is the severe, adverse effect on the behavioural and emotional development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment; this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse e.g. excessive dependence or attention seeking.

Causes for Concern:

The following guide lists possible signs and symptoms of abuse. It is important to remember that the presence of one or more factors does not necessarily give proof that child abuse has occurred. It may, however, indicate that an investigation should take place.

Harm:

Under the *Children Order (NI) 1995*, the authority to investigate concerns is determined by the effect of actions on the child and whether a child is "*suffering*" or "*likely to suffer*" '*significant harm*'. Harm is defined as the ill treatment or the impairment of health or development. Whether it is significant is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of another child of that age and ability.

Identifying Abuse:

Teachers and non-teaching staff are well located to observe children and to note any outward symptoms of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development which may be indicative of child abuse. We recognise that the relationships based on respect, confidence and trust, which are fostered between members of the school community, may lead to the disclosure of any abuse.

Staff should be particularly concerned about a pupil if he or she:

- Has any injury which is not typical of the bumps and scrapes normally associated with children's activities;
- Has unexplained bruising in and around the mouth/ black eyes with no bruising to the forehead or nose/ grasp marks/ finger marks/ bruising of the ears/ linear bruising of the back/ has differing age bruising;
- Regularly has unexplained, possibly minor, injuries;

- Frequently has injuries (even when apparently reasonable explanations are given);
- Confused or conflicting explanations are given on how injuries were sustained exhibits significant changes in behaviour, performance or attitude;
- Indulges in sexual behaviour which is unusually explicit and/or inappropriate to his or her age;
- Discloses an experience in which he or she may have been significantly harmed.

(Ref. appendix 1: **No list of symptoms can be exhaustive. Also, it must always be remembered that alternative medical, physical, psychological or social explanations may exist for the signs and symptoms listed.**)

Dealing with a Disclosure:

Staff have an important role in hearing what children have to say. The school can provide a neutral place where the child feels it is safe to talk. Sensitivity to the disclosure is vital. Staff must listen carefully to what the child is saying, treat it seriously, and value what they say.

Children may feel they will not be believed, or that they will be punished. Staff will need to say that whatever has happened it is not their fault. Fear of the consequences of telling is very common. It can be very tempting to offer a promise of confidentiality to the child. This is not realistic. The child needs to hear the truth about what will happen, together with a commitment to support the child. It is crucial not to ask leading questions. For example, a teacher might say, "Tell me what has happened?" rather than, "Did they do...to you?" Our role is to enable the child to speak and then know what to do next.

Procedures:

Where a member of staff is concerned that abuse may have occurred, he or she must report this immediately to the designated teacher for child protection and/or the Principal. Please remember **no promise of confidentiality can or should be given where abuse is alleged.**

Where a teacher has concerns, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding.

Where another member of the school's staff has concerns she/he should immediately bring them to the attention of either the designated teacher or Principal.

If a child discloses abuse or staff are suspicious, there are four things to do:

- 1. LISTEN - note the time, date, place and people.**
- 2. Report immediately to Miss Louise Dunwoody (designated Child Protection Teacher), or the Principal if she is not available**
- 3. Do not speak to the parents**
- 4. Do not promise the child that it will be kept a secret**

It is **not** the responsibility of teachers or other staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse. It is very important in such cases that prompt action following the correct procedures is taken. (Ref. Procedures - Flow Chart) Similarly, any person who, acting in good faith, reports a case of suspected child abuse will receive the full support of his/her employing authorities.

Please note - In the unlikely event of Miss Louise Dunwoody, Mrs. Pauline Davison (deputy designated teacher) or the Principal not being available to deal with an emergency involving Child Protection issues, or if the designated teacher is the subject of the allegation, then the teacher must speak to the Governor in charge of child protection Miss Helen Bonar.

Special Educational Needs:

Children with Special Needs, especially related to communication, may be particularly vulnerable to all forms of abuse. Extra care should be taken to interpret correctly any indications of abuse and reported in the same way as for other children.

Subsequent Action:

Mr Davison will discuss the matter with the Principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is made.

The Principal and designated teacher will then decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. *If there are concerns that a child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make such a referral.* Unless there are concerns that the parent is the alleged abuser, the parents should be informed immediately.

The Principal may seek advice from the Education Authority Designated Officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. ***The safety of the child remains our first priority.***

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

- Social Services
- The Education Authority designated Officer for Child Protection. ***This will be done in an envelope marked "Confidential- Child Protection"***.

Allegations against Staff: (Ref. Procedures - Flow Chart).

In the light of our school's duty of care the Principal (or where the complaint is against the Principal, the responsibility of the chairperson of the Board of Governors) will ensure that any complaint made that a member of staff has abused a pupil is thoroughly investigated by instigation of the normal child protection procedures. Where the school carries out preliminary enquiries, these will have regard:

- first and foremost to the welfare of the pupil concerned and that of other pupils at the school;
- to the efficient functioning of the school; and
- to the rights of the individual against whom the complaint has been made, especially his or her right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Anyone who knows or believes that an arrestable offence has been committed has a duty to give that information to the police; failure to do so is an offence in itself.

Record Keeping:

When a pupil has disclosed the member of staff should –

- Make some brief notes as soon as possible after the conversation; not destroy the original notes in case they are needed by a court;

- Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child; draw a diagram to indicate the position of any bruising or other injury;
- Record statements and observations, rather than interpretations or assumptions i.e. avoid local knowledge or “hear-say”;
- Use factual and neutral language
- The Principal/ designated teacher will supplement any formal records with details of any advice sought i.e. from whom, when and any advice given.
- Any decisions made regarding an official referral should be recorded and any decision against referral noted with reasons why not.
- **All records must be signed and dated by the Principal and witnessed by the designated teacher or another teacher.**

Handling Information:

- Staff have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals and where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, a legal duty to report this.
- Staff should share information only within appropriate professional contexts. Child protection records will be kept under secure conditions in the Principal’s office.

Reports for Child Protection Conferences:

Reports for child protection conferences should focus on the child’s educational progress and achievements, attendance, behaviour, participation, relationships with other children and adults within the school and, where appropriate, the child’s appearance.

- Reports should be objective and based on evidence;
- They should therefore contain only fact, observations and reasons for concern.

Reports will be made available to the child’s parents at the child protection conference (CPC) and may be used in court. All reports should be checked and signed by the Principal or by the teacher who has assumed these responsibilities in his absence.

Monitoring and supporting pupils on the Child Protection Register:

(Ref. Appendix 5) A list of children whose names are on the child protection register is kept in the Principal’s Office. This includes all children, who, for whatever reason, need to be monitored by the school. Staff are informed of any child in their class who is on this register. Teachers must inform the Principal of any changes/additions so that this list can be kept up to date.

The school monitors pupils whose names are on the child protection register and will alert the child’s Social Worker or Education Welfare Officer when a pupil on the CPR is absent for more than a few days, or on a regular basis, or demonstrates any signs which suggest a deterioration in the pupil’s home circumstances.

The “red book” is available on a “need to know” basis” to staff in the Principal’s Office. This documents any concerns or dealings with social services regarding specific children. In addition, a “blue book” is also kept to log any reported allegations of child abuse against members of staff.

Peer Abuse (Ref. bullying policy):

Where child abuse by another child or young person is suspected the appropriate protection procedures should be followed for both the victim and the alleged abuser (treatment of the abuser is more likely to be effective if begun early in the child's life). Where any conflict of interest arises between the welfare of the suspected abuser and that of the victim, the victim's welfare must take paramount importance.

Appointment of Staff:

The recruitment and appointment process is the starting point for ensuring that only those who are suitable are employed to work in close proximity with children.

Guidance as detailed in the following document shall be adhered to: Circular 1990/28: Disclosure of Criminal Background of Persons with access to children (DENI) (Form for requesting a criminal records check enclosed - Appendix 6).

Volunteers:

Voluntary support, especially that of parents, is much appreciated at Creavery Primary. All potential volunteers undergo a vetting procedure before access to children is granted. (Ref. Appendix 7)

Physical Contact with Pupils:

(Ref. Pupil Staff Relationships Policy)

It is unnecessary and unrealistic to suggest that teachers should touch pupils only in emergencies. Particularly with younger pupils, touching them is inevitable and can give welcome assurance to the child. It is important for teachers to be sensitive to a child's reaction to physical contact and to act appropriately.

In extreme cases a teacher might have to restrain a pupil physically to prevent him/her causing injury to him or herself, to others or to property. In such circumstances no more than the minimum necessary force should be used and the principal or Deputy Designated teacher, (Mrs Davison) should be informed as soon as possible.

2. Associated Issues:**Partnership with Parents**

Parents will be informed of schools' responsibilities and roles involved in child protection and personal safety issues. A successful partnership between parents and schools will be promoted to ensure the children's personal safety and the creation of an atmosphere of mutual trust through co-operation. Parents are made aware of child protection arrangements through the school prospectus,

Similarly, the school will endeavour to help parents understand its responsibility for the welfare of all the children in their charge. Parents will be reminded of the need to send children to school adequately clothed, well fed and having enough sleep. They will also be reminded of the importance of notifying the school when someone other than the parent or usual carer will be picking a child up from school.

Parents will also be informed of how they may make a complaint i.e. to whom, who will respond, the estimated time frame of a response and what further avenues may be pursued. (Ref. Appendix 8).

Resettlement of Schedule 1 Offenders against Children:

In the event of being advised of a risk to pupils the school will issue advice to parents consistent with the Children Order and advice from the P.S.N.I. Advice and support will be available from the Statutory Agencies.

3. Strategies for Implementation:

The onus is upon the school community as a whole to take measures to ensure the implementation of this policy at Creavery Primary School.

Strategies for implementing the whole school policy will include:

- providing a positive environment within the school and classroom in which every child is valued as a member of the community;
- allowing a variety of opportunities for class and group discussion of thoughts and feelings in an atmosphere of trust, acceptance and tolerance e.g. use of Circle Time
- identifying a range of people to whom children can turn to share concerns and discuss problems;
- integrating the key concepts of personal safety within the existing curriculum.

Contribution of the Curriculum:

This whole school policy will be supplemented by a cross-curricular teaching programme to ensure that children are kept safe from harm and can be equipped with the necessary skills to help them to stay safe by recognising unwelcome approaches or behaviour and developing the confidence to resist them as far as possible. All teachers will raise awareness of Health and Safety, R.S.E., Drugs Education and other Pastoral Care issues through maintaining a trusting environment where children are heard, as well as through cross-curricular themes.

Involvement of other Agencies and Professionals

There are occasions when work with pupils on personal safety may be completed with the help of statutory and voluntary agencies e.g. P.S.N.I., N.S.P.C.C., Action Cancer, Translink etc. Where a visit from representatives from an outside agency is organised, it will be seen as an integral part of our personal safety scheme. Resources and discussion will be age appropriate for the pupils concerned and will be followed up by teachers.

4. Roles and Responsibilities:

The Board of Governors

Board of Governors will be aware of child protection issues, the implications for schools and will approve and monitor the Child Protection policy and practice. They should be satisfied that personal safety is being taught within the school, that it is appropriate to children, acceptable to parents and that parents have been informed about it.

Principal

The principal will monitor all that goes on in the school and report back to the Governors. She will ensure that all members of staff, (teaching and non-teaching) have the appropriate training.

Teachers

Teachers will know how to implement the school's child protection policy and procedures and feel confident that they understand the principles inherent in the personal safety programme, so that they can instill confidence in the pupils.

Non-teaching Staff

It is important that all non-teaching staff are aware of the school's child protection policy, know how to react if a pupil should make a disclosure and the procedures to be followed.

PLANNING, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW:

This policy will be continuously monitored by the S.M.T. and evaluated as to its effectiveness by staff and through pupil feedback. It will be reviewed every two years, the first review date being January 2007.

USEFUL CONTACTS:

NSPCC

Jennymount Court
North Derby Street
Belfast BT15 3HN
Tel. (028) 90 351135

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline
24 hours, calls free:
(0800) 800500

NI Childline
74 Duke Street
Londonderry

Childline UK
Freepost 1111
London N1 0BR
Telephone: (0800) 1111

Child Care NI
11 University Street
Belfast BT7 1FY
Tel. (028) 90 23 4499

Nexus Institute
119 University Street
Belfast BT7 1HP
Tel. (028) 90 326803

Education Authority
County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
Ballymena BT42 1HN
Tel. (028) 2565 3333
Designated Officer =

P.S.N.I. (CARE) Units - Ballymena
26 Galgorm Road
Ballymena BT43 5EX
Tel. (028) 2566 4014

PSNI
Sub-divisional Commander
PSNI Station
24 Castle Street
Antrim
Tel. (028) 94463555

Antrim Fieldwork Office
Tel. (028) 94464031

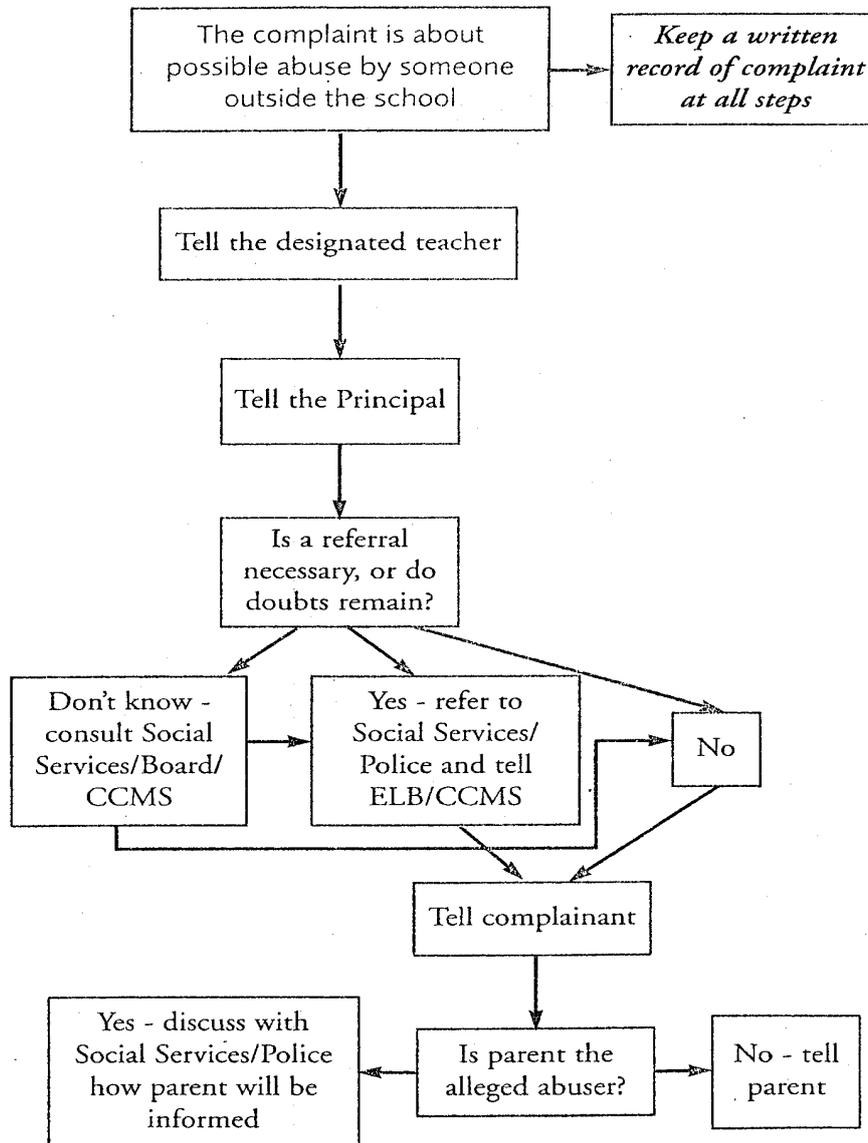
Appendix 1: Possible Signs of Abuse

There may be physical, intellectual, linguistic, emotional and social signs that could be indicative of abuse.

- Soiling and wetting
- Change in behavioural patterns
- 'Frozen' look
- Attention seeking
- Apprehension
- Anti-social behaviour
- Unclean appearance
- Sexually precocious behaviour
- Sexualised drawings and play
- Sudden poor performance in school
- Poor self-esteem
- Self-mutilation
- Withdrawal
- Running away
- Reluctance to return home after school
- Resistance to PE (undressing)
- Resistance to school medicals
- Difficulty in forming relationships
- Confusing affectionate displays
- Evidence of bite marks, cigarette burns, bruising, cuts etc.
- Poor attendance — repeated infections etc.

Appendix 2: Procedures regarding a report of abuse against a child by someone other than school staff.

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



Appendix 3: Procedures regarding reports of child abuse allegedly perpetrated by school staff members.

