

Safeguarding and Child Protection



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"The welfare of the child is paramount."
Children Act, 1989.

1. Introduction

The Staff and Governors of The Thompson Primary School have a collective responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of the children in our care. This policy seeks to support all members of the school community to provide a caring, safe and supportive environment in which individuals are valued for their talents and abilities and are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

2. Our Aims

We aim to:

- Help our pupils recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and develop the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe;
- Ensure that our procedures for reporting and recording suspicions of abuse are clearly defined and understood by Governors, staff and parents;
- Uphold the fundamental principle of the paramountcy of the child as our first and foremost concern.

To this end we will ensure:

- That all of our staff and volunteers are subject to the appropriate background checks (Access NI) and read and understand their responsibilities in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy. A record of information and training will be maintained in school.
- All visitors will be signed in and out of school by school staff and will be clearly identified with visitor passes.
- That all members of staff subscribe to our Code of Practice and recognise that maintaining a positive and supportive ethos is our shared responsibility.
- That all members of staff are trained in identifying signs of abuse and understand the procedures for reporting concerns.
- That all members of staff understand that the problem of child abuse **must never** be ignored and that some forms of abuse constitute a criminal offence.

3. Definitions of Child Abuse

Neglect

- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to cause 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 medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision.
- It may also include non-organic failure to thrive.

Emotional Abuse

- Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.
- It may involve conveying to a child that s/he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as s/he meets the needs of another person.
- It may involve causing a child to 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 harm.

Physical Abuse

- 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 suffocation, confinement to a room or a cot, or inappropriate giving of drugs to control behaviour.

Child Sexual Exploitation

- Sexual Abuse involves the forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, often in exchange for favours or rewards.
- Such activities 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 ways.

“Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care.”

ACPC Regional Policy and Procedure.

“There are many different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.”

ACPC Regional Policy and Procedure.

4. Identification of Possible Abuse

Because of our day-to-day contact with individual children, we as teachers, but also non-teaching staff, including lunchtime supervisors and ancillary staff, are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms or changes in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. Such symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes, including bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances, or drug, alcohol or solvent misuse. Sometimes, however, they may be due to child abuse.

For example:

Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse:

- Multiple bruising and/or bizarre markings on the skin.
- Multiple bruising at different stages of resolution.
- Bruising and/or lacerations around the mouth.
- Finger and thumb marks on the face or body.
- Black eyes (particularly when both are affected).
- Burns, scalds or bites which appeared to have been caused by adults.

Possible Indicators of Physical Neglect:

- Inadequate clothing.
- Poor growth.
- Hunger or apparently deficient nutrition.

Possible Indicators of Emotional Abuse:

- Excessive dependence.
- Excessive attention seeking.

Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse:

- Acquisition of money, clothes etc. without plausible excuse
- Sudden changes of mood.
- Regressive behaviour - bed-wetting.
- Self harm and other expressions of despair.
- Hints of sexual activity in children's conversation, play or drawings (this may include sexually explicit graffiti in exercise books or elsewhere).
- Excessive pre-occupation with sexual matters, including:
 - o Precocious knowledge or apparent experience of adult sexual behaviour.
 - o Sexually provocative behaviour towards children or adults, which is inappropriate to the age of the child.

*Signs such as those listed can do no more than give rise to concern - they are **not** proof in themselves that abuse has occurred.*

Where a member of staff is concerned, s/he must speak to the Designated Teacher immediately.

5. Procedures for Reporting

Designated Teachers for Child Protection

- The Designated Teacher is Mrs. H. White (Senior Teacher) and the Deputy Designated Teacher is Mrs. S. McMullan (Senior Teacher).
- In the absence of all DTs Mrs A. Purdy (Principal) will assume the responsibility for Child Protection matters until DTs are available.
- The Designated Teachers can be contacted via the school office or by telephoning 028 93352361.

The Designated Teacher is Mrs H. White and Mrs S. McMullan is the Deputy Designated Teacher.

The DT is responsible for:

- Training of all staff/support staff.
- Discussing Child Protection concerns with any member of staff and keeping all records.
- Making referrals to Social Services or the PSNI Care Team.
- Liaison with the EA Designated Officer.
- Taking the lead in the development of the Child Protection Policy.
- Compiling a written report to the Governors.

In The Case of Suspicions or Disclosure

- If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or another member of staff which gives rise for concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, ***the member must act promptly and report the matter to the DT immediately.***
- ***S/he should never investigate*** - this is a matter for Social Services. Concerns should be reported to the DT and discussed fully and honestly. The DT will record the details of the discussion and the notes will be dated and signed by both parties.
- ***The content of this discussion or the nature of the concerns should never be discussed to anyone other than the DT. Strictest confidentiality must be maintained.***
- The DT will plan a course of action, and a written record will be maintained.
- Following consultation, a decision will be made as to whether the matter should be referred to Social Services. The overriding factor in all decision making will be the paramountcy of the child. ***If there are concerns that the child may be at risk the school is obliged to make a referral.*** Unless there are concerns that the parent may be the abuser, the parent will be informed immediately.
- Advice and clarification may be sought with the EA Designated Officer or Senior Social Worker before a referral is made.

No member of staff should investigate, or ask probing or leading questions. This is the responsibility of the Social Services or the PSNI Care Team.

Procedures for Reporting cont...

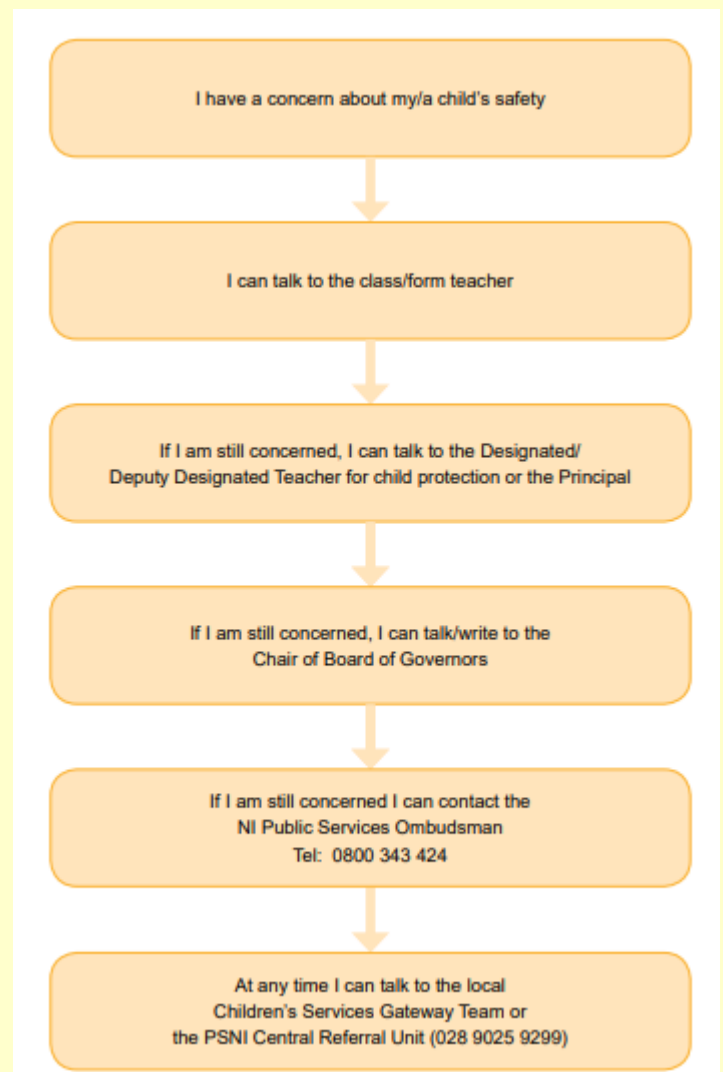
Allegations Made Against a Member of Staff

- If a complaint is made about possible abuse by a member of staff, the DT must be informed immediately. If a complaint is made against the Principal the Chairman of the Board of Governors must be informed immediately.
- 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 as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the Social Services.
- If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Chairman of the Board of Governors should be informed and he/she will follow the appropriate procedures.

Confidentiality is a continuing obligation and is required when a member of staff is 'off duty' or no longer employed by The Thompson Primary School.

Raising a Concern

- If a parent has a potential child protection concern within the school:



6. Code of Conduct

Introduction

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interests of the child 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 children in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. It 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.

As far as possible, staff should conduct private interviews with pupils in a room with visual access and with the door open.

Private Meetings with Pupils

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that 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 and with the door open.
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

Physical Contact with Pupils

- As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- 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.
- 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 1999/10, on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (*Power of member of staff to restrain pupils*)).
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

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Code of Conduct cont...

No member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency.

- 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 another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*
- Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- 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 Principal.
- 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.

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
- In order to protect the interests of the child, no member of staff is permitted to divulge any Child Protection issues relating to any specific child or his/her family or anything a child may tell them to anyone other than the DTs.
- However, all members of the school community must be aware that there are instances in which confidentiality needs to be broken especially if a member of staff is concerned that a child is in danger, either to themselves or from someone else, or if it is suspected that an offence has been committed.

Staff should ensure that they take care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.

7. Preventative Curriculum

- Specific attention is given to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships and the development of a moral thinking and value system.
- Pupils will be taught to develop healthy relationships and adopt confidence-building strategies to develop resilience and coping techniques.
- The use of Circle Time, School Councils, Worry Monsters and Play Therapy give pupils the opportunity to raise concerns.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education is delivered within the 'Personal Development and Mutual Understanding' area of learning.
- 'Keeping children safe' is the key message embedded across the curriculum and in all school activities.

8. Links with Other Policies

The Child Protection Policy complements and supports other policies including:

- Attendance Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safe Handling
- Special Educational needs
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Intimate Care
- Educational Visits
- Staff Code of Conduct
- E-Safety Policy
- Critical Incident Management Policy

9. Safer Schools NI App

Staff, Parents and Governors are encouraged to install the Safer Schools NI app on their personal devices.

This app is a digital safeguarding communication toolkit for the entire school community. It provides online safety guidance and information so that we are better informed and protected together.



10. Operation Encompass

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.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, 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 school safeguarding team. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 'Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools' and a note will be made in the child's child protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police 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 online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

Further information see [The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#).

This policy applies to all activities and clubs supported by the school, including Breakfast Club and Afterschool Club.

Mrs A. Purdy (Principal)

September 2023

The Thompson Primary School

42 Mossley Road

Ballyclare BT39 9RX

028 93352361

Chairperson of Board of Governors - Mr. J. N. Phillips

Useful Telephone Numbers:

Child Protection Support Service - 028 9598 5590

Northern Health and Social Care Trust - 0300 1234 333