

St. Peter's Primary School



School Policy Document

Child Protection

SCHOOL POLICY STATEMENT ON CHILD PROTECTION

We in St. Peter's believe that we have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of all children in our school. We recognise that the children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm and we will do whatever is reasonable to safeguard or promote our pupils' safety and well-being. We aim to fulfil this responsibility through the implementation of our pastoral care policy.

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school. The purpose of the procedures set out in this policy is to safeguard and protect our pupils by ensuring that every adult who works in our school understands action which is required if abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The issue of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school.

Safeguarding Team

Chair of Governors: Mrs Margaret Walsh

Principal: Mrs Paula Alexander

Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mr Damian Laverty

Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Miss Elizabeth McGrath

Designated Governor for Child Protection: Miss Philomena Bar

Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Teacher – Damian Laverty to;

- Provide training to all school staff including support staff
- Be available to discuss the child protection concerns of any member of staff
- Be responsible for recordkeeping of all child protection concerns
- Make referrals to Social services or PSNI Public Protection Units
- Liaise with EA Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Take lead responsibility for the development and updating of the school's child protection policy
- Promote child protection ethos in the school
- Write reports to the Board of Governors regarding child protection
- Maintain all records pertaining to child protection in a secure location (accessed only by The Safeguarding Team as appropriate)
- Keeping the school Principal informed
- Maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services

Deputy Designated Teacher – Elizabeth McGrath;

- Support and undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection as required.
- In the absence of the DT the DDT will assume responsibility for child protection.
- To work co-operatively with DT fulfilling his/her responsibilities
- To work in partnership with DT so that he/she develops sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of DT when required

What is child abuse?

Child abuse means ill treatment or neglect leading to physical, emotional or sexual injury or harm. Child abuse can manifest in a number of ways and can involve a combination of the forms of abuse.

All members of staff are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms, change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. We, in St Peter’s, are alert to the types of abuse and our statutory obligation to report these.

Physical Abuse – physical injury to a child, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unexplained bruises or burns particularly if they are recurrent• Human bite marks, welts or bald spots• Unexplained lacerations, fractures or abrasions• Untreated injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-destructive tendencies• Improbable excuses given to explain injuries• Chronic runaway• Aggressive or withdrawn• Fear of returning home• Reluctant to have physical contact• Clothing inappropriate to weather – worn to hide part of the body

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

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant hunger • Poor state of clothing and / or personal hygiene • Untreated medical problems • Emaciation / distended stomach • Constant tiredness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiredness, listlessness • Lack of social relationships • Compulsive stealing, begging or scavenging • Frequently absent or late • Low self-esteem.

Emotional Abuse (psychological abuse): persistent or significant emotional maltreatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden speech disorder • Signs of mutilation • Signs of solvent abuse • Wetting and / or soiling • Attention seeking behaviour • Poor peer relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental gaps • Withdrawal • Attention seeking • Inhibition in play • Copying negative behaviours

Sexual Abuse: the sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification: the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles. Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by adult males, females and other children.

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soreness or bleeding in the genital or anal areas or in the throat • Torn, stained or bloody underclothes • Chronic ailments such as stomach pains or headache • Difficulty in walking or sitting • Frequent urinary infections • Vulnerable diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronically depressed / suicidal • Inappropriately seductive or precocious • Sexually explicit language • Low self-esteem, self-devaluation, lack of confidence • Recurring nightmares / fear of the dark • Outbursts of anger / hysteria • Overtly protective to siblings

Exploitation- is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or situation, for personal gain. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

These types of abuse apply equally to children with disabilities but the abuse may take slightly different forms, for example, lack of supervision, or the use of physical restraints such as being confined to a wheelchair or bed.

Child Sexual Exploitation

This is a form of sexual abuse and ‘occurs where an individual/group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18 into sexual activity.... This form of abuse can also occur through the use of technology.... It can be carried out by adults, young people’s peers, on an individual or group and perpetrated by females as well as males.’ (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, DHSSPS version 2.0 2017)

As a school, we understand that CSE encompasses a range of sexual offences and staff, who have concerns that it is occurring, will follow the Child Protection Policy and report it immediately to a member of the Safeguarding Team. These concerns will be passed on to the appropriate agencies: PSNI and Social Services.

Potential Indicators	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones without plausible explanation • Truancing/leaving school without permission • Persistently going missing or returning late • Receiving lots of texts/phone calls • Change in mood-agitated/stressed • Appearing distraught/dishevelled • Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing secretiveness around behaviours • Low self-esteem • Change in personal hygiene • Self harm and other expressions of despair • Physical symptoms e.g bruising; bite marks • Collected from school by unknown adults or taxis

Domestic Violence and Abuse

The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy (2016) defines domestic violence and abuse 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, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.’

In St. Peter’s we recognise the negative and damaging impact domestic violence has on a child’s well-being (socially, emotionally and physically). Where cases are detected, and with support from CPSS, the school will report these to the statutory agency.

Harmful Sexualised Behaviour

We recognise this to be any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place without informed consent or the perpetrator uses coercion, threats or intimidation.

The behaviour can include the use of age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases, inappropriate touching, sexual violence or threats and sexual behaviour between children, particularly if there is an age difference of more than two years.

As this behaviour requires intervention, the school would seek support from CPSS and guidance provided by the relevant DE circulars.

Female Genital Mutilation

As a school we take Safeguarding and Child Protection very seriously. With the arrival of children from countries that have differing cultural practices we must be vigilant about those which in themselves are a form of abuse and a criminal practice. As Female Genital Mutilation, in the majority of cases, is thought to take place between the ages of five and eight, then due care must be exercised.

FGM is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs. This is an unnecessary procedure which is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls.

Whilst this may be a cultural practice within some communities it is a criminal offence and teachers have a statutory duty to report cases. Where there is a concern that a child may be at immediate risk of FGM this should be reported to the PSNI without delay.

Gender Identity Issues/ Sexual Orientation

St Peter's Primary School prides itself on providing a safe, happy, enriching, learning environment. The school treats all children with respect and dignity; and values their right to an education, irrespective of actual or perceived sexual orientation. (Ref Anti-Bullying Policy)

Procedures for reporting suspected child abuse;

- The person receiving the complaint (or information), or noticing signs of possible abuse, must notify the designated teacher for child protection in the school. Any information should be recorded with date, time, place and people who were present as well as what was said. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail (Staff complete the Note of Concern).
- The designated teacher must notify the Principal, and together they will decide, taking advice as necessary (CPSS officer), if the information is such that the matter should be referred immediately to the Social Services (if agreement cannot be reached, the decision should be made by the Principal; but where there is doubt, a referral should be made).
- If the school considers that a referral is necessary, it is the Designated Teacher's responsibility to phone the Children's Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI if a child is at immediate risk.
- In most cases parental consent is sought but not if this would place child at risk of significant harm.

- It is imperative that if a child appears to be at immediate risk, the concern is immediately reported to PSNI and Social Services to ensure that emergency protection measures are put in place.
- A UNOCINI referral form will be completed for all referrals even if a referral has been made by phone.

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 must act promptly.**

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a Child Protection nature

DO	DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to what the child says • Assure the child they are not at fault. Explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret • Document exactly what the child says using his/her exact words • Remember not to promise the child confidentiality • Stay calm • Listen • Accept • Reassure • Explain what you are going to do • Record accurately • Seek support for yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask leading questions • Put words into the child's mouth • Ignore the child's behaviour • Remove any clothing • Panic • Promise to keep secrets • Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily • Delay • Start to investigate • Do nothing

Any information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. However only those who need to know will be told.

Bullying (Ref - Anti-Bullying Policy)

We recognise bullying as a form of abuse which will not be tolerated in our school.

We will endeavour to help all children to acquire the skills necessary to cope confidently with bullying but our staff will be vigilant at all times and will act promptly to combat it whenever or wherever it occurs.

Any complaints of bullying made by children or parents will be fully investigated by the Designated Teacher or the Principal. Steps will be taken to protect, reassure and support the 'target'. Interventions will also be planned and monitored to support the pupil(s) displaying the bullying behaviour. The parents of both sets of children will be notified of the episode and of the action taken.

Sanctions taken will depend on the seriousness of the behaviour but will usually involve a loss of privileges. The behaviour of the child(ren) will be monitored until staff are satisfied that it will not be repeated. Parents will be kept informed.

Code of Conduct for all Staff

We at St. Peter's Primary School already demonstrate natural instincts for safeguarding children. This ensures that the recommended child protection procedures are followed with empathy and professionalism.

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 children and young people in their charge must be above reproach.

All staff will ensure that their words and actions cannot be misconstrued as abuse in any form. They will ensure that all physical and verbal contact with children is professional, particularly in a one-to-one situation.

Members of staff will avoid behaviour which may be perceived as emotional abuse, refraining from sarcasm, verbal bullying, or persistent negative comments or actions. Staff members are advised not to make any unnecessary physical contact with pupils. Pupils may need to be touched in emergencies and when needing comfort.

This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people 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.

If a parent has a potential 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/
Deputy Designated Teacher for child protection
or the Principal**



**If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the
Chair of Board of Governors**



**If I am still concerned I can contact the
NI Public Services Ombudsman
Tel: 0800 343 424**



**At any time I can talk to the local
Children's Services Gateway Team at 02890507000 or
PSNI Central Referral Unit at 028 9025 9299**

Dealing with Allegations against a Member of Staff

Principals and Boards of Governors have a duty of care for the welfare of pupils but as employers, they also have a duty of care to their staff and provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation.

- Allegation reported immediately to Principal or Designated Teacher.
- A Lead Individual identified to manage handling of allegation from outset (Principal or a designated senior member of staff).
- If Principal is subject of concern, the allegation should be reported immediately to Chair of the Board of Governors, Deputy Chairperson, designated Governor for Child Protection and person to be the Lead Individual
- Issue should be dealt with priority, confidentiality and unwarranted publicity.
- Allegations should not be shared with other staff or children.
- All allegations must be recorded in Record of Child Abuse Complaints books and retained securely.

Key Points

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

Visitors to Schools

Recruitment and Vetting of Staff and Volunteers (Ref Policy- Volunteers / Vetting)

All new paid teaching and non-teaching staff, examination invigilators and private contracted transport providers require an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) from Access NI before taking up post.

Volunteers who work unsupervised are required to have an EDC but those who work under supervision are not required to have an EDC but are risk assessed by Mr Laverty.

Checks may still be carried out for supervised volunteers through Access NI.

Visitors to schools, such as parents, suppliers of goods and services, to carry out maintenance do not routinely need to be vetted before being allowed onto school premises. However, such visitors need to be managed by school staff and access limited/restricted as needs require.

The School Curriculum

Children are taught the 'preventative curriculum' through lessons across several subjects or cross curricular themes. Teachers mainly do this through PDMU, TWAU and our religious programme. The children are taught by lesson and example to show respect for themselves and others as we are all unique. In order to grow in to healthy, positive, responsible citizens they are taught to respect themselves and protect themselves. Through UICT, the children learn how to behave online, how to report e-bullying and behaviours which are appropriate and acceptable. Through TWAU –Science they are made aware of substances which can harm them and how to keep themselves happy and healthy. As part of the religion programme, the children recognise they are all special and that their bodies are private to them.

The pupils are made aware of school staff responsible for Child Protection. Mr Laverty visits each class to discuss the Child Protection team's role within the school and how they are there to help. Teachers regularly discuss with their children who they can speak to. Pupils know they can speak to any teacher, teaching assistant or member of the wider school community should they have concerns.

There are signs throughout the school to remind parents and pupils that St Peter's staff are there to support them should issues arise. Critical incidents, drug awareness, bullying and other issues are covered within the school's Pastoral Care document.

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.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice.

It is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children and their manner and approach to individuals. This will ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions to colleagues, children or parents / guardians.

Accepted: May 2019

Review: May 2020