



# Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

St. Oliver Plunkett's Primary School,  
Ballyhegan.

(Adapted from the 'Regional Child Protection Policy – Sept. '21')



<b>NAME:</b>	<b>ROLE:</b>
<b>Mr. Seamus Galvin</b>	<b>Principal</b>
<b>Mr. Michael Lee</b>	<b>Chair of Board of Governors</b>

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Contents:
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1. Our School's Child Protection Ethos and Key Principles of Safeguarding
2. Linked Policies
3. The School Safeguarding Team
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Categories of child abuse and definitions of harm
6. Responding to Safeguarding and Child Protection Concerns
7. Consent, Confidentiality and Information Sharing
8. Record Keeping
9. Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Group Meetings
10. Staff Recruitment and Vetting Practices
11. Code of Conduct for all Staff and Volunteers
12. Staff Training
13. The Preventative Curriculum
14. Managing Child Protection during the COVID-19 pandemic
15. Operation Encompass
16. Monitoring and Evaluation
17. Appendices

## **1. Our School's Child Protection Ethos and Key Principles of Safeguarding**

### **CHILD PROTECTION ETHOS**

We in St. Oliver Plunkett's PS have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school

### **PRINCIPLES**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, "Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland" (DHSSPSNI, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools" Circular 2017/04 (amended September 2019; updated June 2020) and the SBNI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy:

- The child or young person's welfare is paramount;
- The voice of the child or young person should be heard;
- Parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together;
- Partnership;
- Prevention;
- Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances;
- Protection; and
- Evidence based and informed decision making.

## **2. Linked Policies**

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Attendance
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Educational Visits
- Complaints Procedure for Parents/Guardians
- First Aid and Administration of Medicine Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Use of electronic devices for staff and students
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- Online Safety Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Misuse of Drugs Policy

**Key policies are currently under a programme of rolling review and will be made available to parents via the school website at [www.stoliverplunkettsballyhegan.co.uk](http://www.stoliverplunkettsballyhegan.co.uk) and any parent requiring a paper copy of any above policy should contact the school office.**

### **3. The School Safeguarding Team**

The following are members of the schools Safeguarding Team

- Designated Teacher: Mrs. Siurdon Fearon

Deputy Designated Teachers:

- Mr. Seamus Galvin (Principal)
- Mr. George Cullen
- Designated Governor for Child Protection Mrs. Michelle McGrane
- Chair of the Board of Governors Mr. Michael Lee

### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **4.1 The Board of Governors**

Board of Governors must ensure that:

- A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- A Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher are appointed in their schools.
- They have a full understanding of the roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection.
- Safeguarding and child protection training is given to all staff and governors including refresher training.
- Relevant safeguarding information and guidance is disseminated to all staff and governors with the opportunity to discuss requirements and impact on roles and responsibilities.
- The school has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every two years.
- The school has an Anti-Bullying Policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying. See the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.
- The school ensures that other safeguarding policies are reviewed at least every 3 years or as specified in relevant guidance.

- There is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school.
- All school staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted, in line with DE Circular 2012/19.
- They receive a full annual report on all child protection matters (It is best practice that they receive a termly report of child protection activities). This report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the school, including training for staff.
- The school maintains the following child protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff and 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools: Safeguarding and child protection concerns; disclosures of abuse; allegations against staff and actions taken to investigate and deal with outcomes; staff induction and training.

#### **4.2 The Chair of the Board of Governors**

The Chairperson of the BoG plays a pivotal role in creating and maintaining the safeguarding ethos within the school environment.

In the event of a safeguarding or child protection complaint being made against the Principal, it is the Chairperson who must assume lead responsibility for managing the complaint/allegation in keeping with guidance issued by the Department (and relevant guidance from other Departments when it comes to other early years settings), employing authorities, and the school's own policies and procedures.

The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring child protection records are kept and for signing and dating annually the Record of Child Abuse Complaints against staff members even if there have been no entries.

### **4.3 The Designated Governor for Child Protection**

The Designated Governor will provide the child protection lead in order to advise the Governors on:

- The role of the designated teachers
- The content of child protection policies
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school
- The content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report
- Recruitment, selection and vetting of staff

### **4.4 The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher**

The designated teacher and deputy designated teacher must:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and roles
- Organise training for all staff (whole school training) including the Induction of volunteers and newly appointed staff
- Lead in the development of the school's Child Protection Policy
- Act as a point of contact for staff and parents
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents
- Make referrals to Social Services Gateway team or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate
- Liaise with the Education Authority NI (Southern Region) Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- Keep the School Principal informed
- Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection

## 4.2 The Principal

The Principal must ensure that:-

- DENI 2017/04 is implemented within the school
- A Designated Teacher (DT) and Deputy Designated Teachers (DTT) is appointed.
- All staff and volunteers receive child protection training annually
- All necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- The Chairman of the Board of Governors (and, when appropriate, the Board of Governors) is kept informed
- Child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors meetings and termly updates & annual report are provided
- The school child protection policy is reviewed annually and that parents and pupils receive a copy of this policy at least once every 2 years.
- Confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.

## 4.5 Other Members of School Staff (including teachers)

It is always preferable to prevent abuse, or for intervention to take place at the earliest possible stage. Through their day-to-day contact with individual children, school staff, especially teachers, but also non-teaching staff, including lunch-time supervisors and ancillary or auxiliary staff, are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms, change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development.

Remember the 5 Rs: Receive, Reassure, Respond, Record and Refer

**The member of staff must:**

- refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teachers for Child Protection;
- listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief and support the child
- act promptly

- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child and inform the DT immediately (**Appendix 1**)
- be alert to all types of abuse and to their legal obligations (see Annex A), including reporting of offences - Section 5 of the **Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967** makes it an offence to fail to disclose an arrestable offence.
- avail of whole school training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children
- **Not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures
- **Not** investigate
- **Not** ask leading questions

**In addition, the Class Teacher should:**

- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying, concerns about home conditions including disclosures of domestic violence.

#### **4.6 Parents**

The primary responsibility for safeguarding and protection of children rests with parents who should feel confident about raising any concerns they have in relation to their child.

Parents should play their part in Child Protection by:

- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence or using the absence reporting form on the homepage of the school website. If neither occurs, then **On the child's return to school they must bring in a written note to explain their absence.** An office notebook where phone calls are recorded and checked against absentees will be held in the main office as will printed records of website absence reports. This assures the school that the parent/carer knows about the absence. More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: [www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection)

- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the child after school;
- letting the school know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home;
- familiarising themselves with the suite of Child Protection Policies and complaints procedures;
- reporting to the office when they visit the school
- raising concerns they have in relation to their child with the school.

## 5. Categories of child abuse and definitions of harm

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools- a guide for Schools' DENI 2017/04.

### 5.1 Definition of Abuse

Child abuse occurs in families from all social classes and cultures and in communities, agencies and organisations. Abusers come from all walks of life and all occupations and professions. Child abuse can manifest in a number of ways and can involve a combination of the forms of abuse. Those working with children and young people must have an awareness and understanding of the nature and prevalence of different manifestations within their practice area. A child in need of protection is a child who is at risk of, or likely to suffer significant harm which can be attributed to a person or persons or organisation, either by an act of commission or omission; or a child who has suffered or is suffering significant harm. **'Harm'** means ill treatment or the impairment of health or development, and the question of whether harm is significant is determined in accordance with Article 50(3) of the Children Order.

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 other with a duty of care towards a child.

## 5.2 Types of Abuse

- **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 Abuse** is deliberately physically 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 opportunity 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.

- **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, and engagement 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.

Although 'exploitation' is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR categories as children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse.

\*All of the above definitions are from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and young People in Northern Ireland August 2017.

#### **REMEMBER:**

- **A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.**
- **When we become aware of young people below the age of consent engaging in sexual activity the Designated Teacher has a duty to share this information with Social Services.**
- **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.**

#### **Specific Types of Abuse**

In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse that we in **St. Oliver Plunkett's P.S.** are aware of and have therefore included them in our policy. Please see [Appendix 2](#)

### **5.3 Signs and symptoms of abuse ~ Possible Indicators**

The following sign and symptoms of abuse including physical and behavioural indicators has been adapted from the **SBNi Regional Core Policies and Procedures guidance**.

<b><u>Physical Indicators</u></b>	<b><u>Behavioural Indicators</u></b>
Unexplained bruises – in various stages of healing – grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations; or abrasions; untreated injuries; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday	Self destructive tendencies; aggressive to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; improbable excuses to explain injuries; chronic runaway; uncomfortable with physical contact; come to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home; clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories

### **Emotional Abuse**

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
Well below average in height and weight; “failing to thrive”; poor hair and skin; alopecia; swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet; recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; sudden speech disorders; signs of self mutilation; signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness); extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).	Apathy and dejection; inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations; rocking/head banging; inability to play; indifference to separation from family; indiscriminate attachment; reluctance for parental liaison; fear of new situation; chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour; poor peer relationships.

## **Neglect**

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
<p>Looks very thin, poorly and sad;            constant hunger; lack of energy;            untreated medical problems;            special needs of child not being met;            constant tiredness; inappropriate dress;            poor hygiene;            repeatedly unwashed; smelly;            repeated accidents, especially burns.</p>	<p>Tired or listless (falls asleep in class);            steals food; compulsive eating;            begging from class friends;            withdrawn; lacks concentration;            misses school medicals;            reports that no carer is at home;            low self-esteem;            persistent non-attendance at school;            exposure to violence including unsuitable videos.</p>

## **Sexual Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation**

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
<p>Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs;            bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas;            torn, stained or bloody underclothes;            chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches;            difficulty in walking or sitting;            frequent urinary infections;            avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers;            unexplained pregnancies where the identify of the father is vague; anorexia/gross over-eating.</p>	<p>What the child tells you;            Withdrawn; chronic depression;            children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal;            over concerned for siblings;            poor self esteem; self devaluation;            lack of confidence; peer problems;            lack of involvement;            massive weight change;            suicide attempts (especially adolescents);            hysterical/angry outbursts;            lack of emotional control;            sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour;            inappropriate sex play;            repeated attempts to run away from home;            unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories;</p>

	vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; exposure to pornographic material.
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**Child Sexual Exploitation**

<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>
Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation.	Increasing secretiveness around behaviours. Low self-esteem.
Receiving lots of texts/ phone calls prior to leaving.	Change in mood - agitated/stressed.
Physical symptoms eg bruising; bite marks.	Appearing distraught/dishevelled or under the influence of substances.
Collected from school by unknown adults or taxis.	Self-harm and other expressions of despair.
New peer groups.	Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age.
Significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend.	Truancy/leaving school without permission.
Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less).	Persistently going missing or returning late.
Self-harm and other expressions of despair.	
Evidence or suspicion of substance abuse.	

**For further information and clarification on specific types of abuse, please refer to ‘Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools- a guide for schools’ (DENI circular 2017/04) available on the DENI website.**

## 6. Procedures for reporting a child protection concern

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. Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm<sup>1</sup>.

### 6.1 How a Parent can make a report

At St. Oliver Plunkett's we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern they can talk to the class teacher or the Principal/Designated teacher for child protection. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. If they feel that the issue has not been appropriately addressed at BOG level, they can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman. At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Public Protection Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in **Appendix 3**.

### 6.2 Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff .

When staff in St. Oliver Plunkett's P.S. become aware of concerns, or are approached by a child they should not investigate – this is a matter for Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher and full notes should be made using the Note of Concern **Appendix 1**. These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the designated teacher. The person

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<sup>1</sup> Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (March 2016)  
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence. The Designated Teacher will consult with the Principal or other relevant staff always taking care to avoid due delay. If the Principal is not available then the DT will assume the responsibility of making the referral directly if they feel it is in the child's best interest. If required advice may be sought from the Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection. The Designated Teacher may also seek clarification from the child or young person, their parent/carer.

If a child protection referral is not required the school may consider other options including monitoring, signposting or referring to other support agencies e.g. Family Support Hub with parental consent and, where appropriate, with the child/young person's consent.

If a child protection referral is required the Designated Teacher will seek consent from the parent/carer and/or the child unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the designated teacher will telephone Social Services Gateway Team. He/she will also notify the EANI Designated Officer for Child Protection. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be completed and forwarded to the Gateway team with a copy sent to the EANI Designated Officer for Child Protection.

The designated teacher may consult with the Education Authority Northern Ireland (EANI) (Southern Region) Designated Officer for Child Protection or Social Services Gateway Team before a referral is made. During consultation with the Designated Officer the child's details will be shared. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our prime priority.

If the Principal has concerns that a child may be at immediate risk from a volunteer, the services of the volunteer will be terminated immediately.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in **Appendix 4**.

### **6.3 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff**

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or Designated teacher if he/she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal/Designated teacher)

If a complaint is made against the Principal the Designated Teacher will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will ensure that necessary action is taken.

Where the matter is referred to Social Services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately. Child protection procedures as outlined in **Appendix 5** will be followed in keeping with current Department of Education guidance.

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.

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

## 7. Consent and Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Prior to making a referral to Social Services the consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.

In circumstances where the consent of the parent/carer and/or the young person has been sought and is withheld we will consider their wishes. However, our primary consideration

must be the safety and welfare of the child and we will make a referral in cases where consent is withheld if we believe on the basis of the information available that it is in the best interests of the child/young person to do so.

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held “in confidence”. In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. Where abuse is suspected schools have a legal duty to refer to the Statutory Agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a ‘need to know’ basis.

Should a child transfer to another school whilst there are current child protection concerns we will share these concerns with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school.

<b>8. Record Keeping</b>
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All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person and are only accessible by the Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teacher(s) and Principal.

<b>9. Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Group Meetings</b>
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The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teachers or Principals may be invited to attend an initial and review Child Protection Case Conferences and/or core group meetings convened by the Health & Social Care Trust. They will provide a written report which will be compiled following consultation with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the ‘need to know’ principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored and supported in accordance with the child protection plan.

## **10. Safe Recruitment and Vetting Practices**

Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals' access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system and schools must ensure that all persons on school property are vetted, inducted and supervised as appropriate. All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in St. Oliver Plunkett's P.S. are vetted/supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

## **11. Code of Conduct for all Staff and Volunteers**

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 child and young people in their charge must be above reproach. The school's code of conduct is available on request. Regular visitors and placement students all sign to confirm that they have received a copy of the Code of Conduct upon induction.

## **12. Staff Training**

St. Oliver Plunkett's P.S. is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on policy and procedures with some members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and annual refresher training. The Principal/Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses provided by the Child Protection Support service for Schools.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and given copies of these policies. Training is refreshed every 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

Online safety is an integral part of our Child protection training for all staff. Additionally, Mr. Galvin attends the annual 'UK Safer Internet Centre/C2K' online safety briefings- ensuring the dissemination of key information and that policy and practice are updated in line with best practice recommendations.

### 13. The Preventative Curriculum

The statutory personal development curriculum requires schools to give specific attention to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers a medium to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours. (2017/04).

Our school seeks to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resiliencies of children so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through class assemblies and there is **a permanent child protection notice board in the main corridor**, which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers. A flow diagram of how a parent may make a complaint is also on display. An enlarged flow diagram for a teacher allegation is in staff room.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues include:

- Year 6 and 7 children participate in a community awareness programme run by the PSNI on keeping safe online

- Every year ALL pupils participate in ChildLine School Services, parent workshops are hosted on site by the NSPCC on the alternate year
- All classes in the school use the Northern Ireland Curriculum folders ‘Living, Learning, Together’.
- Year 7 pupils participate in the Love for Life Programme.
- Year 5 pupils take part in the NI Fire and Rescue Service talks on fire safety.

#### 14. COVID-19 changes to our Child Protection Policy, Annex to Child Protection Policy

##### **Response to COVID-19**

There have been significant changes within our setting in response to the outbreak and the uncertainty of Education Restart. Despite the changes, the school’s Child Protection Policy is fundamentally the same: **children and young people always come first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and contact the DT in line with our established safeguarding procedure.**

This annex sets out some of the adjustments we are making in line with the changed arrangements in the school and following advice from government and local agencies.

**Reporting arrangements now include the option of emailing a member of the safeguarding team.**

The school arrangements continue in line with our child protection policy.

*The Designated Teacher (DT) is: Mrs. Fearon*

*The Deputy Designated Teachers (DDT) are: Mr. Cullen and Mr. Galvin*

The school’s approach ensures the DT or a deputy is always on site while the school is open. Staff will continue to follow the Child Protection procedure and advise the safeguarding leads immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in school or

not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.

Children's services may be affected by the impact of the virus on staff and an increased demand for services. Where a child is at risk of significant harm there may be a need to be persistent in referring concerns to the local authority. The arrangements for contacting gateway are:

Should a child in the school's view be at risk of significant harm and local agencies are not able to respond, the school will immediately follow the safeguarding children partnership escalation procedure

### **Identifying vulnerability**

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/new-vulnerable-children-guidance-published-schools-and-parents>

During Lockdown some of our families were assisted by the school or local community and this will continue for as long as required.

### **Staff will be aware of increased risk**

The pressures on children and their families at this time are significant. There will be heightened awareness of family pressures through being contained in a small area, poverty, and financial or health anxiety. These areas should be considered in the setting of any work for children to undertake at home (including recognising the impact of online learning – see below). Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DSL about any concerns.

### **Risk online**

Young people may be using the internet more during this period. The school may also use online approaches to deliver training or support. Staff will be aware of the signs and signals of cyberbullying and other risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when children were learning at the school.

- The school continues to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place
- Our governing body will review arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate

(through C2K)

- The school has taken on board guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning and guidance for safer working practice.
- Staff have discussed the risk that professional boundaries could slip during this exceptional period and been reminded of the school's code of conduct and importance of using school systems to communicate with children and their families.
- Children and young people accessing remote learning receive guidance on keeping safe online and know how to raise concerns with the school, Childline, the UK Safer Internet Centre and CEOP.
- Parents and carers have received information about keeping children safe online with peers, the school, other education offers they may access and the wider internet community. Parents have been offered the following links:
  - Internet matters - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
  - Net-aware - for support for parents and careers from the NSPCC
  - Parent info - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
  - Thinkuknow - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
  - UK Safer Internet Centre - advice for parents and carers
- Free additional support for staff in responding to online safety issues can be accessed from the Professionals Online Safety Helpline at the UK Safer Internet Centre.

## 15. 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.

[The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2022/146/contents/made)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2022/146/contents/made>

## 16. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Safeguarding Team in St. Oliver Plunkett's will update this policy and related procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the child protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Teacher and through the BOG link governor for Child protection.

Date Policy Reviewed: 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Signed:

*Mrs. S. Fearon* (Designated Teacher)

*Mr. S. Galvin* (Principal)

*Mr. Michael Lee* (Chair of Board of Governors)



**Appendix 1**

**CONFIDENTIAL  
NOTE OF CONCERN  
CHILD PROTECTION RECORD – REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER**

Name of Pupil:
Year Group:
Date, time of incident/disclosure:
Circumstances of incident/disclosure:
Nature and description of concern:
Parties involved, including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom:
Action taken at the time:

Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:		
Any further action taken:		
Written report passed to Designated Teacher:	Yes	No
If 'No' state reason:		
Date and time of report to the Designated Teacher:		
Written note from staff member placed on pupil's Child Protection file:	Yes	No
If 'No' state reason:		

Name of staff member making the report:

Signature of staff member:

Date:

Signature of Designated Teacher:

Date:

## APPENDIX 2

### Specific Types of Abuse

**Grooming** of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child's/young person's loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

Adults may misuse online settings e.g. chat rooms, social and gaming environments and other forms of digital communications, to try and establish contact with children and young people or to share information with other perpetrators, which creates a particular problem because this can occur in real time and there is no permanent record of the interaction or discussion held or information shared. Those working or volunteering with children or young people should be alert to signs that may indicate grooming, and take early action in line with their child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures to enable preventative action to be taken, if possible, before harm occurs. Practitioners should be aware that those involved in grooming may themselves be children or young people, and be acting under the coercion or influence of adults. Such young people must be considered victims of those holding power over them. Careful consideration should always be given to any punitive approach or 'criminalising' young people who may, themselves, still be victims and/or acting under duress, control, threat, the fear of, or actual violence. In consultation with the PSNI and where necessary the PPS, HSC professionals must consider whether children used to groom others should be considered a child in need or requiring protection from significant harm

If the staff in St. Oliver Plunkett's P.S. become aware of signs that may indicate grooming they will take early action and follow the school's child protection policies and procedures. The HSCT and PSNI should be involved as early as possible to ensure any evidence that may assist prosecution is not lost and to enable a disruption plan to reduce the victim's contact with the perpetrator(s) and reduce the perpetrator(s) control over the victim to be put in place without delay.

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017).

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE. Although younger children can experience CSE, the average age at which concerns are first identified is 12-15 years of age. Sixteen and seventeen year olds, although legally able to consent to sexual activity can also be sexually exploited.

CSE can be perpetrated by adults or by young people's peers, on an individual or group basis, or a combination of both, and can be perpetrated by females as well as males. While children in care are known to experience disproportionate risk of CSE, **the majority of CSE victims are living at home.**

### **Statutory Responsibilities**

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the school's child protection policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

### **Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse**

The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy (2016) defines domestic and sexual violence and abuse as follows:-

#### **Domestic Violence and Abuse:**

'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.'

#### **Sexual Violence and Abuse**

'any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).' Please note that coercive, exploitative and harmful behaviour includes taking advantage of an individual's incapacity to give informed consent.

If it comes to the attention of school staff that Domestic Abuse, is or may be, affecting a child this will be passed on to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team.

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. FGM is a form of child abuse and, as such, teachers have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, through agreed established procedures set out in our school policy. Where there is a concern that a child or young person may be at immediate risk of FGM this should be reported to the PSNI without delay. Contact can be made directly to the Sexual Referral Unit (based within the Public Protection Unit) at 028 9025 9299. Where there is a

concern that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, referral should be made to the relevant HSCT Gateway Team.

### **Children Who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour**

Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child's development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. As a school we support children and young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships. Teachers are often therefore in a good position to consider if behaviour is within the normal continuum or otherwise.

It must also be borne in mind that sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the school's positive behaviour policy but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as 'healthy', 'problematic' or 'sexually harmful'. Healthy sexual behaviour will normally have no need for intervention, however consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting. Problematic sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. For example, a one-off incident may simply require liaising with parents on setting clear direction that the behaviour is unacceptable, explaining boundaries and providing information and education. Alternatively, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the EA CPSS may be required. The CPSS will advise if additional advice from PSNI or Social Services is required. We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2016/05 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

### **What is Harmful Sexualised Behaviour?**

Harmful sexualised behaviour is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when:

- There is no informed consent by the victim; and/or
- The perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim
- Harmful sexualised behaviour can include: Using age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Using sexual violence or threats.
- Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older - particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not.
- However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them - for example, if the older child is disabled.

Sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the schools positive behaviour policy but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

Harmful sexualised behaviour will always require intervention and we will follow the procedures in the child protection policy and, seek support from the EA CPSS.

## **E Safety/Internet Abuse**

Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, social environments and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

In January 2014, the SBNI published its report 'An exploration of e-safety messages to young people, parents and practitioners in Northern Ireland' which identified the associated risks around online safety under four categories:

- **Content Risks:** the child or young person is exposed to harmful material.
- **Contact risks:** the child or young person participates in adult initiated online activity.
- **Conduct Risks:** the child or young person is a perpetrator or victim in peer-to-peer exchange.
- **Commercial Risks:** the child or young person is exposed to inappropriate commercial advertising, marketing schemes or hidden costs.

We in St. Oliver Plunkett's P.S. have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of pupils accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The school's actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the pupils in the school or on school-organised activities.

**Sexting** is the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobile or over the internet.

Pupils need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual relationship) and in these cases we will contact local police on 101 for advice and guidance. We may also seek advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service

Please be aware that, while offences may technically have been committed by the child/children involved, the matter will be dealt with sensitively and considering all of the circumstances and it is not necessarily the case that they will end up with a criminal record. It is important that particular care is taken in dealing with any such cases. Adopting scare

tactics may discourage a young person from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of a sexual image.

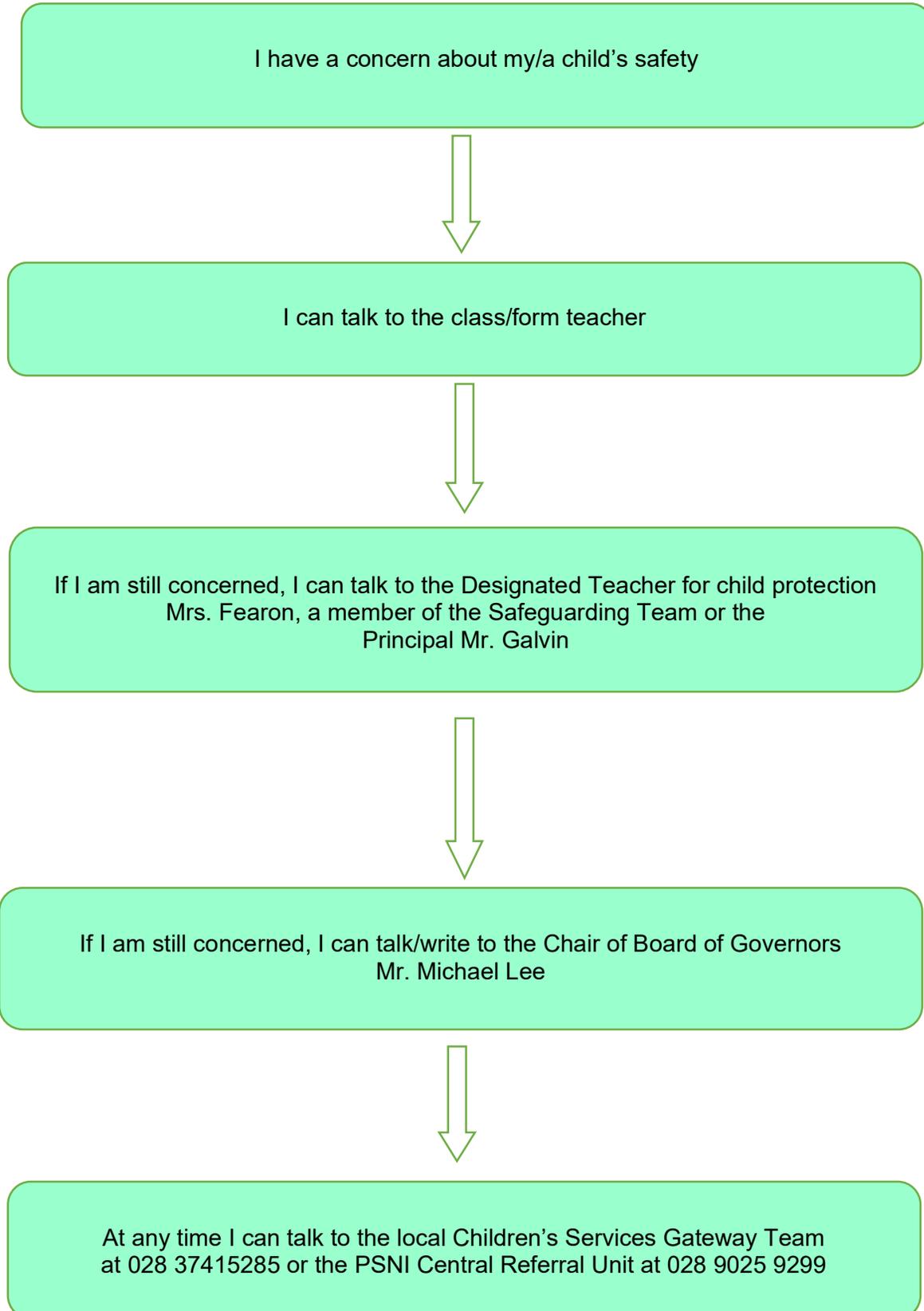
## **2/Sharing an Inappropriate Image with an Intent to Cause Distress**

If a pupil has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that it is **not forwarded to anyone else**. Schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individuals consent. For further information see: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted)

If a young person has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures of the school will be followed.

### Appendix 3

**If a parent has a potential child protection concern:**



**Appendix 4: Procedure where the School has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff.**



Member of staff completes the Note of Concern on what has been observed or shared and must ACT PROMPTLY.

Source of concern is notified that the school will follow up appropriately on the issues raised.

Staff member discusses concerns with the Designated Teacher Mrs. Fearon or Deputy Designated Teachers in his/her absence and provides note of concern.

Designated Teacher Mrs. Fearon should consult with the Principal or other relevant staff before deciding upon action to be taken, always taking care to avoid undue delay. If required advice may be sought from a CPSS officer

**Child Protection referral is required**

Designated Teacher seeks consent of the parent/carer and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm then telephones the Children's Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI if a child is at immediate risk.

He/she submits a completed UNOCINI referral form within 24 hours.

Designated Teacher clarifies/discusses concern with child/ parent/carers and decides if a child protection referral is or is not required.

**Child Protection referral is not required**

School may consider other options including monitoring the situation within an agreed timescale; signposting or referring the child/parent/carers to appropriate support services such as the Children's Services Gateway Team or local Family Support Hub with parental consent, and child/young person's consent (where appropriate).

Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed as to the action taken. The Designated Teacher will maintain a written record of all decisions and actions taken and ensure that this record is appropriately and securely stored.

## Appendix 5

### Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff

