

Ballyclare Secondary School

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy



“Every child should have a rewarding educational experience.”

1. Child Protection Ethos

We, in Ballyclare Secondary School acknowledge our pastoral responsibility towards our pupils and recognise that all children and teenagers have a fundamental right to be protected from harm. Young people cannot learn effectively or develop unless they feel secure.

We, in Ballyclare Secondary School have a responsibility for the pastoral care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care. 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 and to further external professional bodies.

2. Principles

The following principles should underpin all strategies, policies, procedures, practice, and services relating to safeguarding children and young people.

The child or young person’s welfare is paramount - The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration for the courts and in childcare practice. An appropriate balance should be struck between the child’s rights and parents’ rights. All efforts should be made to work co-operatively with parents, unless doing so is inconsistent with ensuring the child’s safety.

The voice of the child or young person should be heard - Children and young people have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously, taking account of their age, and understanding. They should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may affect their lives and be provided with appropriate support to do so where that is required. Where feasible and appropriate, activity should be undertaken with the consent of the child or young person and, where possible, to achieve their preferred outcome.

Parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped to stay together - Parents have responsibility for their children rather than rights over them. In some circumstances, parents will share parental responsibility with others such as other carers or the statutory authorities. Actions taken by organisations should, where it is in the best interests of

the child, provide appropriate support to help families stay together as this is often the best way to improve the life chances of children and young people and provide them with the best outcomes for their future.

Partnership - Safeguarding is a shared responsibility and the most effective way of ensuring that a child's needs are met is through working in partnership. Sound decision-making depends on the fullest possible understanding of the child or young person's circumstances and their needs. This involves effective information sharing, strong organisational governance and leadership, collaboration and understanding between families, agencies, individuals, and professionals.

Prevention - The importance of preventing problems occurring or worsening through the introduction of timely supportive measures.

Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances - Where a child's needs can be met through the provision of support services, these should be provided. Both organisations and individual practitioners must respond proportionately to the needs of a child in accordance with their duties and the powers available to them.

Protection - Children should be safe from harm and in circumstances where a parent or carer is not meeting their needs, they should be protected by the State.

Evidence-based and informed decision making - Decisions and actions taken must be considered, well informed, and based on outcomes that are sensitive to, and take account of, the child or young person's specific circumstances, risks to which they are exposed, and their assessed needs.

In relation to our school setting, for the purposes of this policy:

The term 'child' has the same meaning as in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 i.e., a person under the age of 18.

In the case of a pupil with special educational needs the term 'child' should be interpreted as including any person who has not attained the age of 19 and is a registered pupil at the school. While a school has responsibility for all registered pupils, referral pathways and processes may differ for a young person over the age of 18 (Education (NI) Order 1996).

All schools have a safeguarding responsibility towards the young people in their charge and should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded, and their safety is preserved.

Safeguarding/Child Protection arrangements should be accessible in our school and understood by children so that they know what to do and who to go to.

References to 'parent' have the same meaning as anyone with 'Parental Responsibility' as defined in Article 6 of the Children Order i.e., 'all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property'. In practical terms, it means the responsibility to care for, and the right to make important decisions about, the child.

The term 'staff' refers to all staff including paid, unpaid, non-teaching and volunteers.

The term 'Designated Teacher' encompasses the role of both the Designated Teacher (DT) and Deputy Designated Teachers (DDT).

3. Legal Context

There is a broad range of international and domestic legislation relating to child welfare and protection. Details of all relevant legislation are set out in Annex A of DE's Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools Guidance (2022). We as a school are aware of their responsibilities in each case, however, as a starting point, stakeholders should take cognisance of the following:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Kingdom agreed to be bound by the Convention in 1991. It sets out the rights which all children and young people up to the age of 18 should have.

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 is the principal statute governing the care, upbringing, and protection of children in Northern Ireland. It applies to all those who work with and care for children, whether parents, paid carers, or volunteers. It is the most comprehensive and far-reaching childcare legislation ever introduced to Northern Ireland. It clearly identifies five key principles which are Paramountcy, Prevention, Protection, Partnership and Parental Responsibility with the welfare of the child considered as being of paramount importance.

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003

Articles 17, 18 and 19 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 place a statutory duty on BOG to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils and to determine the measures to be taken at our school with a view to protecting pupils from abuse (whether at school or elsewhere). Article 18(d) requires BOG to prepare a written statement of such measures and to provide this to parents. BOG must also have regard to any guidance given by the Department, the EA, the former Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) (Department of Health (DOH) from 9 May 2016), SBNI and the relevant Employing Authority.

Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008

This legislation reduced the age of consent in NI (in line with other areas of the UK) and strengthened the legal safeguards for young people between the ages of 16 and 17. Significantly, it introduced the concepts of grooming (including online behaviours), and 'Abuse of a Position of Trust'.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 provides the legislative framework for the establishment of a Disclosure and Barring Service and requirements relating to individuals who work with children and vulnerable adults. This legislation, brought in to address concerns around the plethora of criminal justice legislation in recent years, defines 'regulated activity' with children and prevents persons on barred lists from engaging in regulated activity.

The Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011

This Act established the SBNI and places interagency co-operation on a statutory footing. The objective of the SBNI is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Northern Ireland by co-ordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body represented on the board. The SBNI is also responsible for development of regional policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, came into operation on 01 September 2021 which requires the BOG of the school to determine the anti-bullying measures pursued at the school and to record all incidents of bullying behaviours or alleged bullying behaviours involving a registered pupil.

The Domestic Abuse Information-sharing with Schools etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

Section 26 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 enables the Department of Justice to bring forward regulations to provide for an Operation Encompass model for Northern Ireland.

Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

The Act which became law in April 2022 created several new offences, including non-fatal strangulation, up-skirting and down-blousing, cyber-flashing, and masquerading as a child online, and implements certain elements of the Gillen report on serious sexual offence cases.

Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030

The Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 is a requirement of the Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015, it is the overarching strategic framework for government to improve the health and well-being of all children in Northern Ireland.

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (August 2017)

This policy replaces the 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children guidance issued in 2003 and provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors. It outlines how communities, organisations and individuals must work both individually and in partnership to ensure children and young people are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy 2013-2020 and subsequent action plans

This Strategy highlights an overarching strategic vision for addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse. The DOH and the Department of Justice (DOJ) are the strategic lead departments in taking forward both the domestic violence and abuse and sexual violence and abuse agendas through improved effective, collaborative, and cohesive engagement within and across Northern Ireland.

Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership

'Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership' was published by the former DHSSPS (now the DOH) and the DOJ, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive in July 2015 with the aim of improving safeguarding arrangements for adults who are at risk of harm from abuse, exploitation, or neglect. A key objective is to reduce the incidence of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect of adults who are at risk in Northern Ireland and to provide effective support and, where necessary, protective responses and access to justice for victims and their families.

The EA's Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) offices will have contact details for Adult Safeguarding Teams.

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 contact 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.](#)

4. School Safeguarding Team

As best practice, in the best interests of the children, and as a support for the Designated Teachers, the school should establish a Safeguarding Team. This team should include the Chair of the BOG, the Designated Governor for Child Protection, the Principal (as Chair), the DT and the DDT. The team may co-opt other members as required to help address specific issues, for example the SENCO, ICT Co-ordinator, etc.

This Safeguarding Team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the school.

The EA CPSS provides child protection training in relation to the specific responsibilities of each member of the team.

The responsibilities of the team should include:

The monitoring and periodic review of Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements in the school.

Support for the DT in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities, including recognition of the administrative and emotional demands of the post.

Ensuring attendance of Governors and staff at relevant training - including refresher training - in keeping with legislative and best practice requirements.

The following are members of the school's Safeguarding Team:

- Designated Teacher: Mr A Nicholl (Vice Principal – Pastoral Care (Acting))
- Deputy Designated Teachers: Mrs L McKay / Ms L Dunwoody / Mr A Cowden / Ms S O'Connor / Mrs N Weir
- Principal (Acting): Mrs W Shingleton
- SENCO: Ms J Miniss
- Designated Governor for Child Protection: Mr R Thompson
- Chair of the Board of Governors: Rev. Dr. ET Kirkland

*As best practice, the safeguarding team should review their child protection / safeguarding practices annually using the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) pro-forma entitled 'Guidance for evaluation of child protection / safeguarding'.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone in education plays a part in keeping children and young people safe from harm and abuse.

All staff in a school, both teaching and non-teaching, have a responsibility to ensure the protection and welfare of children is paramount. This also extends to any volunteers accepted to work in the school during school hours when pupils are on the premises.

Board of Governors:

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 places a statutory duty on BOG to:

Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils.

Have a written child protection policy.

Specifically address the prevention of bullying in school behaviour management policies.

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, places a statutory duty on BOG to keep a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying involving a registered pupil at the school.

To fulfil their responsibilities BOGs are obligated to acknowledge and work within the relevant guidance and procedural documents that have been produced by the Department of Education (DE) and DOH.

All Governors should receive an element of safeguarding training as part of their induction with the Chair and Designated Governor for Child Protection undertaking full CPSS training. All Governors should undertake refresher Child Protection training every term of office (four years). This training may be delivered by the Principal or DT with resources available from the EA CPSS.

BOG must ensure that:

A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.

A DT and DDT are appointed in their schools.

They have a full understanding of the roles of the DT and DDTs 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, see Section 10, are reviewed at least every three 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 and DE Circular 2013/01.

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.

Chair of 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.

Designated Governor for Child Protection

The BOG will delegate a specific member of the governing body to take the lead in safeguarding/child protection issues in order to be able to advise the governors on:

The role of the DTs;

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.

Principal

The Principal, as the Secretary to the BOG, will assist the BOG to fulfil its safeguarding and child protection duties, keeping them informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to safeguarding and child protection, ensuring any circulars and guidance from DE are shared promptly, and timely inclusion of child protection activities on the BOG meeting agenda. In addition, the Principal takes the lead in managing child protection concerns relating to staff.

The Principal has delegated responsibility for establishing and managing the safeguarding and child protection systems within the school. This includes the appointment and management of suitable staff to the key roles of DT and DDT Designated Teacher posts and ensuring that new staff and volunteers have safeguarding and child protection awareness sessions as part of an induction programme.

It is essential that there is protected time and support to allow the DTs to carry out this important role effectively and that DTs are selected based on knowledge and skills required to fulfil the role.

The Principal must ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy, or summary, of the Child Protection Policy at intake and, at a minimum, every two years.

Designated Teacher for Child Protection

Every school is required to have a DT and DDT with responsibility for child protection. These are highly skilled roles developed and supported through a structured training programme, requiring knowledge and professional judgement on complex and emotive issues. The role involves:

The induction and training of all school staff including support staff.

Being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff.

Responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns.

Maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services eg Family Support Hubs⁴.

Making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where appropriate.

Liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection.

Keeping the school Principal informed.

Lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy.

Promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school.

Compiling written reports to the BOG regarding child protection.

Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection

The role of the DDT is to work co-operatively with the DT in fulfilling his/her responsibilities.

It is important that the DDT works in partnership with the DT so that he/she develops sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of the DT when required. DDTs are also provided with the same specialist training by CPSS to help them in their role.

Schools may have more than one DDT depending on their size, location, and the presence of an additional provision.

6. Recruitment and Vetting of Staff and Volunteers

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 supervised and vetted as appropriate if they are engaged in regulated activity.

It is the responsibility of the BOG to ensure that there is an official record kept of when vetting checks are successfully completed for all staff.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 provide the legislative framework for a vetting and barring scheme for people who work with children and vulnerable adults.

Process

The responsibilities and processes to be followed are clearly set out in:

DE Circular 2013/01 'Disclosure and Barring Arrangements: Vetting Requirements for Paid Staff working in or Providing a Service in Schools'

DE Circular 2012/19 'Disclosure and Barring Arrangements: Changes to Pre-Employment Vetting Checks for Volunteers Working in Schools from 10 September 2012'

Access NI Clearance

DE Circular 2013/01 (updated September 2015) sets out vetting requirements for schools. In brief, the following groups must have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) from

Access NI **before** taking up post:

All new **paid** teaching and non-teaching staff.

Examination Invigilators.

Private contracted transport providers - named drivers.

Volunteers

There are two types of volunteers working in schools: those who work unsupervised and those who work under supervision. Volunteers who work unsupervised are required to have an EDC. A volunteer who works under supervision is not required to obtain an EDC, however, schools/organisations must determine whether the level of supervision meets the statutory standard - see DE Circular 2012/19.

Schools must ensure that volunteers, e.g., coaches, music tutors, school photographers etc, who are employed by others, have the necessary clearances in place and a record of these should be maintained by the Principal.

Visitors to School

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

Visitors should be:

Met/directed by school staff/representatives.

Signed in and out of the school-by-school staff.

Given restricted access to only specific areas of the school, if appropriate.

Escorted by a member of staff/representative, where appropriate.

Clearly identified with visitor/contractor passes.

Given access to pupils restricted to the purpose of their visit.

Cordoned off from pupils for health and safety reasons if delivering goods or carrying out building/maintenance or repairs.

Pupils on Work Experience

Health and Social Care Programmes will require an EDC for pupils on long term placement and may be required for pupils on work experience/shadowing placements. Schools should apply through their Access NI Registered Body in advance (See DE Circular 2013/01 for more information).

Pupils coming into the school on work experience do not require Access NI clearance as they are required to be fully supervised by school staff. The normal child protection induction processes should apply.

7. Child Protection Training

Board of Governors

Child Protection Training for school governors has three specific elements:

Initial Child Protection Awareness Training as part of the induction programme for all new governors.

Child Protection Training from the CPSS for Chairperson and Designated Governor for Child Protection in order that they can assist the full BOG with their child protection governance. This should be completed during each term of office (every four years).

Training on recruitment, selection and vetting which incorporates child protection legislation and DE guidance for all governors who will be sitting on interview or teacher appointments panels.

Online training packages are available on EA TV at however this is to provide additional support rather than act as a substitute for child protection training.

Designated Teacher Training/Deputy Designated Teacher Training

All new DTs and DDTs should attend the two-day CPSS Introduction to Child Protection course, at the earliest opportunity in the term in which they are appointed to the post, and refresher training within three years of their initial training date and thereafter.

A certificate of attendance will be issued to DTs and DDTs as proof of attendance, and this may be examined by ETI during any inspection. All training is subject to the SBNI Child Protection and Safeguarding Learning and Development Strategy 2014-2017.

The DT and DDT are expected to cascade child protection training to the whole school, at a minimum every two years, with new staff receiving training as part of their induction programme. All staff should know how to identify the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and be aware of the relevant child protection procedures, including how to contact the designated teacher.

8. Conduct of Staff

The protection and promotion of the welfare of children and young people is a responsibility for all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching. In meeting this, staff should work towards a culture of mutual trust and respect in school through which the best interests of the children and young people entrusted to their care is paramount.

Naturally, implicit in this is the assumption that the conduct of school staff towards their pupil group must be above reproach. This holds true whatever the age, gender, or developmental maturity of the pupils, but clearly the younger the child, or the greater the degree of learning difficulties he/she has, the less likely it will be that he/she will be able to recognise and respond appropriately to an abuse by any member of staff or the trust that his/her position confers.

Each school should operate a Code of Conduct which extends to staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and volunteers and should include:

Setting an example;

Relationships and attitudes;

Private meetings with pupils;

Physical contact with pupils;

Honesty and integrity;

Conduct outside of work;

E-Safety and internet use; and

Confidentiality.

Adherence to the Code will reduce the risk of allegations being made. Schools should adapt and update the Code to meet their individual needs and agree the contents with teaching and non-teaching staff.

The 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. Rather, it is intended to assist staff by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on conduct. The Code of Conduct can be referred to in the school's child protection/pastoral care policy and should be made known to parents.

The Code cannot address every possible circumstance in which staff might find themselves, however it is intended that staff will be mindful of the Code which will raise awareness of issues and situations which can potentially arise. 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 safe practice.

9. Reporting Concerns

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

Refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teacher 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.
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.

Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the school's non-teaching staff sees such signs, he/ she should immediately bring them to the attention of either the class teacher or the Designated Teacher, and it may be appropriate for the necessary clarification to be carried out by the teacher.

Such clarification may reassure teachers that abuse has not occurred; but signs and symptoms which cause concern, while perhaps not a result of abuse, may nevertheless indicate that the child or his/her family is in need of intervention by statutory, voluntary or community-based services through a 'child in need' referral (with parental consent).

Care must be taken in asking, and interpreting children's responses to, questions about indications of abuse. The same considerations apply when a child makes an allegation of abuse, or volunteers' information which amounts to that. In some circumstances, talking to the child will quickly clarify initial concerns into a suspicion that abuse has occurred, and point to the need for an immediate referral. Staff should be aware that the way in which they talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings, and the extent of questioning should, therefore, be kept to a minimum:

Staff should not ask the child leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind.

Staff should not, therefore, ask questions which impose the adult's own assumptions. For example, staff should say, "Can you tell me what has happened", rather than, "Did they do X to you?"

The priority at this stage is to actively listen to the child, and not to interrupt or try to interpret if he/she is freely recalling significant events (*the child must not be asked to unnecessarily recount the experience of abuse*) and as soon as possible afterwards to make a record of the discussion. This should be passed on to the DT, using for example, the template 'Note of Concern' from the DE 'Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools' circular 2020/07. The note should record the time, date, place and people who were present, as well as what was said. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail, but *under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed, or a photograph taken*.

Any comment by the child, or subsequently by a parent or carer or other adult, about how an injury occurred should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, quoting words actually used.

Staff should not give the child or young person undertakings of confidentiality, although they can and should, of course, reassure that information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know.

Staff should also be aware that their note of the discussion may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings. Subsequent sections of this booklet give guidance on record-keeping. It should be emphasised that lack of proper records will not, of itself, exempt the school from any subsequent requirement to give evidence in court. *It is therefore essential that accurate contemporaneous (i.e., recorded as soon as possible after the event) records are maintained.*

Staff should **not** ask the child to write an account of their disclosure for the record.

The NSPCC report 'No-one Noticed No-one Heard: A Study of Disclosures of Childhood Abuse' (2013) describes childhood experiences of disclosing abuse. It provides useful insight on barriers to children's disclosure and key factors that promoted disclosure.

In addition, the *Class Teacher* and other relevant *Pastoral Staff* 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.

10. Role of Parents / Carers

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. As part of the ongoing work of fostering trust and good relationships with parents/ carers, the school should help parents/carers to understand its responsibility for the welfare of all the children and young people in its charge.

All policies, including child protection, pastoral care, anti-bullying, positive behaviour, online safety, and complaints, should be issued to parents/carers at intake*. The child protection policy, in particular, should be reviewed and re-issued, at a minimum, every two years*.

** Issue of a summary of the full policy is sufficient provided it contains clear details of how to access the full policy, including a hard copy if required.*

It should be clear that the school will always protect the best interests of the child and, in cases of suspected abuse, may refer cases directly to the investigative agencies. It is important that parents take time to read these policies and know they are required to inform the school:

If the child has a medical condition or educational need.

If there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child.

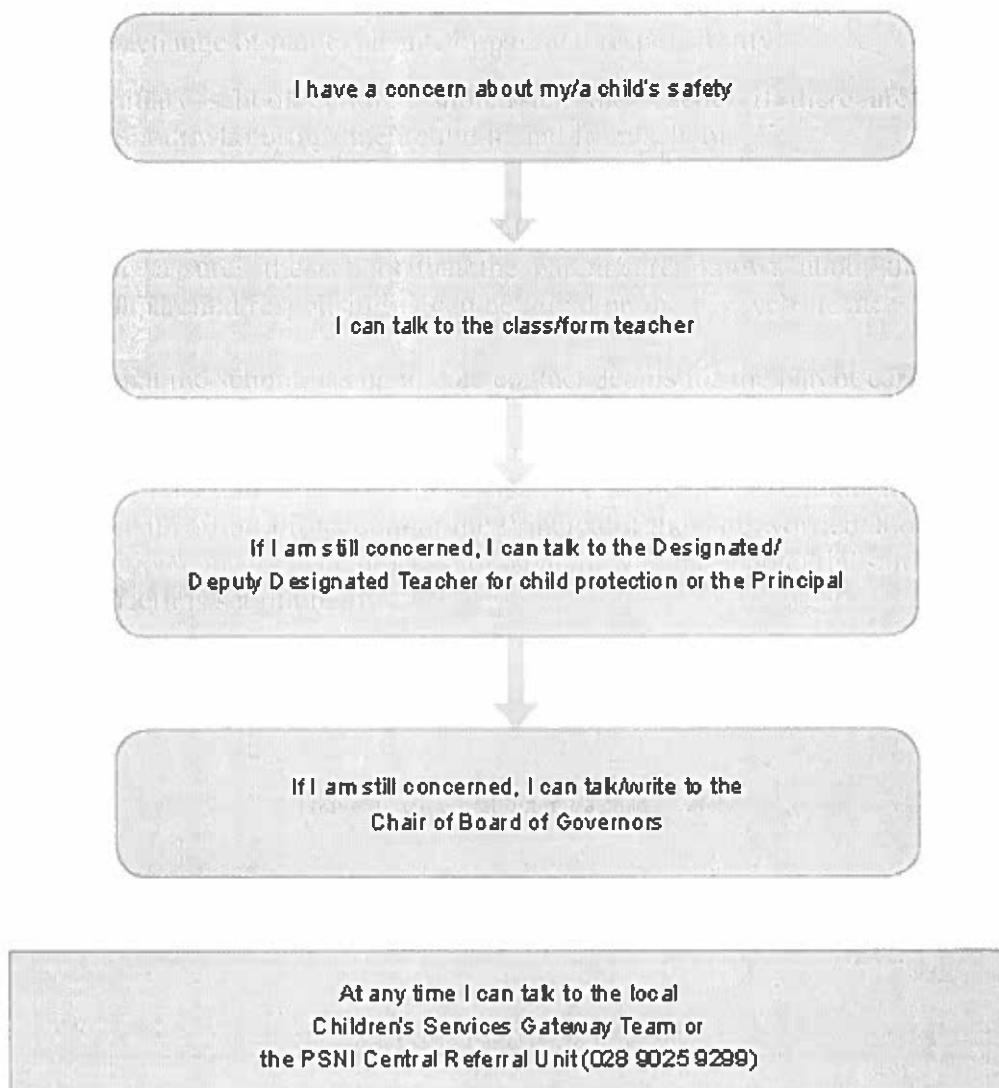
If there is any change in a child's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility.

Parents of primary school children should tell the teacher if there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school.

Parents should contact the school if their child is absent and send in a note on the child's return to school. 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:

It is essential that the school has up to date contact details for the parent/carer.

The arrangements for parents to make known to staff any concerns they may have about the safety of their (or another) child should be clear, including how to contact the school, the class teacher, the DT for Child Protection, or the Principal if they are worried about a safeguarding or child protection concern. The process for a parent who has a potential safeguarding or child protection concern is set out below:



If you, as a parent, have escalated your concern as set out in the above flowchart, and are of the view that it has not been addressed satisfactorily, you may revert to our complaints policy. This policy should culminate in the option for you to contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) who has the legislative power to investigate your complaint.

If you have a concern about a child's safety or suspect child abuse within the local community, it should be brought directly to the attention of the Children's Services Gateway Team.

11. What Is Child 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.

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.

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. More detail on the concept of harm and significant harm can be found in Section 2.4 of Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (August 2017) and in the Children (NI) Order 1995.

Staff should 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. This includes crimes against children.

Observation of signs and symptoms of possible abuse can do no more than give rise to concern - they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. It must always be remembered that alternative medical, psychological, or social explanations may exist for the signs and symptoms of possible abuse. However, teachers and other staff should be aware of the possible implications of, and alert to, all such signs, particularly if they appear in combination or are repeated regularly.

Where a member of staff is concerned that abuse may have occurred, he/she must report this immediately to the DT who has specific responsibility for child protection.

The designation of a teacher for this purpose should not be seen as diminishing the role of all members of staff in being alert to signs of abuse and being aware of the procedures to be followed, including those in cases where an allegation is made against any member of the school's staff, teaching or non-teaching (see Section 5.5 on Dealing with Allegations Against a Member of Staff - DE Circular 2015/13).

It is imperative that any disclosure by a child, or concern that indicates a child may be at immediate risk, is reported **immediately** to the PSNI and Social Services to ensure that emergency protection measures are put in place. This is particularly important if there is a risk to the child at home. Contact details for the PSNI Central Referral Unit and Duty Social Workers can be found in the Contacts Section.

Pupils who are the victims of abuse often display emotional or behavioural difficulties which may require a holistic assessment of need to determine appropriate level and types of intervention.

12. Types of Abuse

Child abuse may take a number of forms, including:

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.

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, 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.

* All the above definitions are from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2017)

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

Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 artwork or stories.

Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Looks very thin, poorly and sad; ▪ constant hunger; lack of energy; ▪ untreated medical problems; ▪ Untreated head lice/other infestations; ▪ special needs of child not being met; ▪ constant tiredness; inappropriate dress; ▪ poor hygiene; ▪ repeatedly unwashed; smelly; ▪ repeated accidents, especially burns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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.

Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 identity of the father is vague; ▪ anorexia/gross over-eating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What the child tells you; ▪ Withdrawn; chronic depression; ▪ excessive sexual precociousness; seductiveness; ▪ 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 schoolwork or behaviour; ▪ inappropriate sex play; ▪ repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's artwork or stories; ▪ vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; ▪ exposure to pornographic material.

Exploitation / CSE

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes in mood (agitated or stressed). ▪ Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age. ▪ Bruising, bite marks. ▪ Collected from school by an unknown adult or taxis. ▪ Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less). ▪ Self-harm and other expressions of despair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation. ▪ Truancing/leaving school without permission. ▪ Persistently going missing or returning late. ▪ Receiving lots of texts/phone calls prior to leaving. ▪ New peer groups. ▪ Significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend. ▪ Increasing secretiveness around behaviours. ▪ Low self-esteem. ▪ Evidence or suspicion of substance abuse.

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. 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 and established school procedures. In the UK, FGM has been a specific criminal offence since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985. The female genital mutilation Act 2003 replaced the 1985 Act in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Serious Crime Act 2015 further strengthened the law of FGM.

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.

In the 12 months from 1 October 2017 to 30 September 2018, there were 31,008 domestic abuse incidents recorded by the PSNI, an increase of 1,582 incidents (5.4%) on the previous 12 months and the highest in any 12-month period since the start of data collection in 2004/2005.

NSPCC research carried out in 2009 'Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships' highlights partner violence as a significant concern for young people's wellbeing, providing unequivocal evidence for the need to develop more effective safeguards in this area of child welfare. The survey identified that three-quarters of girls in a relationship experienced emotional violence of some form, a third reported sexual violence and a quarter experienced physical violence with one in 10 girls the physical violence was defined as severe. Half of boys in a relationship reported emotional violence, 18 per cent experienced physical violence and 16 per cent sexual violence. Thus, a substantial number of young people will experience some form of violence from their partner before they reach adulthood.

As a school, we ensure that:

Training for staff by the DTs for Child Protection includes awareness of domestic violence and its impact on children.

The Child Protection Policy includes recognition of the impact on children of an abusive family setting and states that cases will be reported to the appropriate statutory agency.

13. Procedures for Making Complaints in Relation to Child Abuse:

How a Parent can make a Complaint

At Ballyclare Secondary School we aim to work closely with the parents/carers 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 Principal/Designated teacher for child Protection. If they are still concerned, they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team, CPSS or to the PSNI Public Protection Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in **Appendix 2**.

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

Where staff 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. 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 who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The Designated Teacher will decide whether, in the best interest of the child, the matter needs to be referred to social services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately.

The Designated Teacher may consult with the Education Authority's Designated Officer for Child Protection (CPSS) 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.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the designated teacher will telephone Social Services Gateway Team. They will also notify the Education Authority 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 Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection. A copy will also be kept on file in accordance with record keeping guidance.

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 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 Principal 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 Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately. Child Protection procedures as outlined will be followed in keeping with current Department of Education guidance.

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

14. Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Group Meetings

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teachers or Principal may be invited to attend an initial and review Child Protection Case Conferences and/or core group meetings convened by the Health and 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.

15. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

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.

16. Record Keeping

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer, pursuant to DE’s guidance. 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 and Principal.

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.

17. The Preventative Curriculum

In the classroom, regular morning Class Teacher assemblies are used as a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self-confidence, respect and sensitivity among classmates.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through whole school and year assemblies and there are safeguarding information posters displayed throughout the school, 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 the staff room.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues:

First Aid Training for staff;

Participation in NIABF Anti Bullying Week;

Healthy eating promotions throughout school;

KS4 / KS5 Promoting Positive Mental Health Programme (Bloom School’s Charter)

Materials are provided for use in class assembly (discussion starters/ exercises). Topics include being organised for school, sources of support, self-esteem, dealing with conflict among friends, resisting peer pressure, being a good friend, body image and dealing with stress;

Peer Mentoring;

Regular liaison with Behaviour Support Team and Education and Welfare Service;

E-Safety Information;

Education Authority Nurses deliver talks to various year groups throughout the year, including but not limited to, RSE talks;

LLW includes lessons and talks on a range of topics throughout the school such as:

Dealing with stress;

Sexual health;

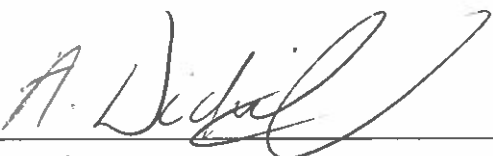
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco awareness;

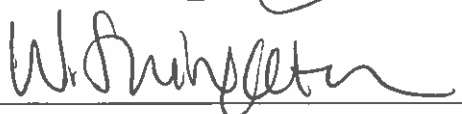
Risk taking behaviours.

18. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Safeguarding Team in Ballyclare Secondary School will update this Policy and 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.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the policy.

Signed:  (Designated Teacher)

 (Principal – Acting)

 (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:

Appendix 2

How can a Parent make a Complaint?

I have a concern about my/a child's safety

I can talk to the class/form teacher

If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (**Mr Nicholl**) or the Principal.

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

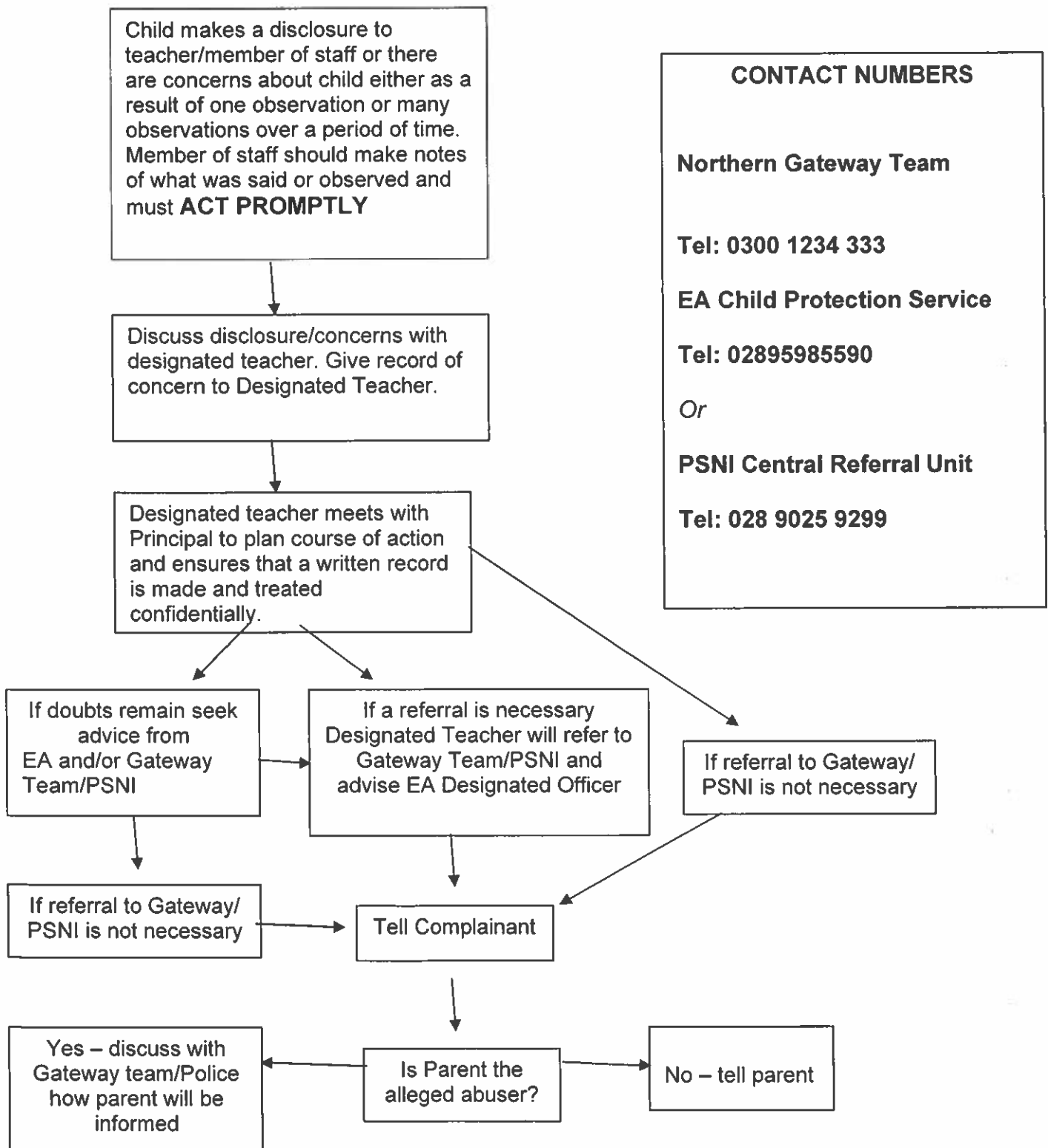
If I am still concerned, I can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman

Telephone: 0800 343 424

At any time, I can talk to the local Children's Services Gateway Team or PSNI Central Referral Unit (028 9025 9299)

Appendix 3

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



Appendix 4

Procedure where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff

