

St Mary's College

CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING POLICY



Reviewed	December 2024
Date Adopted (Board of Governors)	January 2025
To be reviewed next	December 2026
Written by	Ms Karen Holt (Designated Teacher)
Principal	Mr Brendan McGinn
Chairperson of the Board of Governors	Mrs Sarah Kelly

1. CHILD PROTECTION ETHOS

We in St Mary's College 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.

2. 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, the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance 'Safeguarding and Child Protection: a guide for schools Circular 2017/04, the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005), Cooperating to safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2016), Safeguarding Board Act Northern Ireland (2011).

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy.

- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- In any incident, the child's welfare must be paramount; this overrides all other considerations.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families, but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first.

3. OTHER RELEVANT 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:

- Positive Behaviour for Learning
- Anti-Bullying Prevention
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Confidentiality
- Special Educational Needs
- Educational Visits
- Administration of Medicines
- Eating disorders

- Health & Safety
- Intimate Care
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Digital Technologies
- E-safety Policy
- Drugs Education/Alcohol and Drugs Misuse (Policy and Procedures for Staff)
- Critical Incident Management Plan
- Bereavement and Loss
- Pastoral Care

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing a copy should contact the School Principal or visit the school. Some of the policies can be accessed at www.stmarysderry.com

4. SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING TEAM

The following are members of the schools Safeguarding team:

Chair of the Board of Governors – Mrs. Sarah Kelly

Designated Governor for Child Protection – Fr. Paul Farren

Principal – Mr. Brendan McGinn

Designated Teacher – Ms. Karen Holt

Deputy Designated Teacher – Ms. Paula Taylor

Assistant Designated Teacher – Mrs Roisin Rice, Ms Yvonne Connolly & Mrs Orla Mulhern

The main role of the team is to:

- Monitor and periodically audit the safeguarding and child protection arrangements in the school
- Identify any actions required to address audit findings or ETI inspections of its safeguarding/ child protection responsibilities
- Provide support for the DT, and the deputy DT in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Board of Governors

The Board of Governors as a body must ensure that the school fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities in keeping with current legislation and DE guidance including:

- Ensuring that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment
- Ensuring that safeguarding/child protection is a standard item on the agenda of Board of Governors meetings (Best practice)
- Ensure that the school has a Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy in place and that staff implement the policy
- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment & selection training provided by the EA Child Protection Support Service for Schools, the EA Governor Support and Human Resource departments.

- Ensure that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive termly updates and a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity
- Approving the Schools child protection/safeguarding policy at least once every 2 years
- Ensuring that there is a timetabled review (every 2/3 years) of all other safeguarding policies and that they are presented to the BOG for approval.
- Receiving annual child protection reports
- Ensuring there is a staff code of conduct for all adults working in the school
- Attending relevant child protection/safeguarding training for Governors

5.2 School Staff

Teachers, Classroom Assistants and other Support staff in school see children on a daily basis over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and a child may choose to disclose to them allegations of abuse. Members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures to the Designated/Deputy Teacher for Child Protection/Principal. In addition, class teachers and Year Heads should also keep the Designated Teacher informed in writing or verbally about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse. Pro-forma for reporting a concern or disclosure is included at appendix 5a, 5b or 5c (depending on the staff member).

5.2 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/safeguarding children policies
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school
- The content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teacher's Report
- Recruitment, selection and vetting of staff

5.3 The Board of Governors

Board of Governors must ensure:

- That the school has a Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy in place and that staff implement the policy;
- Relevant Child Protection training is kept up-to-date by at least one governor and a record kept of the same;
- That confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to an entire Board of Governors on a need-to-know basis.

5.4 The Principal

The Principal must ensure that:

- DENI 1999 / 10 is implemented within the school
- A designated teacher and deputy are appointed
- All staff receive child protection training
- All necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- The Chairperson of the Board of Governors (and the Board of Governors) is kept informed
- Child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors meetings (termly updates & annual report)
- The school child protection/safeguarding children 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.
- Manage child protection concerns relating to staff
- Maintaining and securely storing the School Record of Child Abuse Complaints, and make it available to the Board of Governors on a yearly basis

5.5 The Designated Teacher (And Deputy)

The designated teacher and deputy must:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role
- Organise training for all staff (whole school training)
- 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 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/safeguarding children
- Promotes a Child protection ethos within St. Mary's College

5.6 The Class Teacher

Teachers see children over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and hear allegations of abuse.

The teacher must:

- refer concerns to the Designated/deputy teacher for Child Protection;
- listen to what is being said and support the child
- act promptly

- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child (appendix 5a)
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed through the written "Record of Concern" pro-forma (**appendix 5b**) or verbally 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
- 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

5.7 The Parents

Parents should play their part in Child Protection/ Safeguarding Children by:

- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's situation;
- 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 School's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Internet and Child Protection /Safeguarding Children Policies;
- reporting to the office when they visit the school
- raising concerns, they have in relation to their child with the school.
- Make requests to the school in advance for permission to allow their child to attend medical or other appointments. It is recommended that Parents use the absence notes in the back of their child's daybook and the child is required to have their form tutor (or a suitable alternative) sign the absence slip before leaving the school. Parents should include details of any arrangements to collect the child for an appointment. From time to time parents may seek emergency appointments and the school will accommodate this; however, this will take 15-20 minutes particularly if the request is made at lunchtime.

6. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

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 person or organisation, either by an act of commission or omission; or for a child who has suffered or is suffering significant harm as

defined in article 50 of the Children Order. (Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, DHSSPS 2016)

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005)

6.1 Definition of Abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. 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.

Definition of Harm: Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic violence happens. Abuse can occur outside of the family environment. Evidence has shown that babies with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

Although the harm from abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

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

6.2 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. (Co-operating to safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2015)

Physical Abuse is the 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.

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Can look very thin, poorly and sad Constantly hungry Lack of energy Untreated medical conditions Needs of child not being met Constant tiredness Poor hygiene Bad odour from child- persistent Repeated accidents	Exposure to violence including unsuitable videos, DVD'S, Internet material- a child may act out this behaviour in school or with others Lacks concentration Tired in class, sleepy and unable to concentrate Low self-esteem Persistent lateness/absence to school

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child. It is also sometime 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 child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making fun of what they say and how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers. (Co-operating to safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2016)

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Self-harm signs Solvent abuse (signs of this include mouth sores, drowsiness and the smell of glue on a person) Failing to 'thrive' and can be below weight and height Poor hygiene, including condition of hair and skin Soiling and bed wetting Developmental delays and extreme difficulties that may include anorexia, vomiting or stooping)	May be inappropriate in class Rocking/banging of head Inability to mix with peers or maintain friendships Indifference to separation from family Reluctance for parental involvement Attention seeking/needy

Sexual Abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration 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 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. Woman can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. (Co-Operating to safeguard Children and Young people in Northern Ireland 2016)

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Bite marks, bruises, scratch marks to breasts, inner thighs, buttocks or lower abdomen Bleeding/bruising to genital area Inability to walk/ tenderness in abdomen area Stained and bloodied clothes, especially from the buttocks and/or vaginal area Avoidance of P.E. and avoidance of getting changed in front of peers Unexplained pregnancies	Withdrawn Depression Excessive use of sexualised language Being able to refer to body parts with inappropriate language Can speak of adult sexualised behaviour and have knowledge beyond their years Lack of confidence Low self-esteem and low self-confidence Peer problems Anger issues

Over eating/under eating Difficulty sitting and getting up	Suicide attempts Weight changes Hysterical outbursts
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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 for the CPR 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, as children who have suffered from exploitation will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young people in Northern Ireland 2016)

The Department of Health has a revised definition, and this has been adopted in Northern Ireland. It is very important to note the definition of exploitation.

‘Child exploitation 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 to be consensual. Child 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 Northern Ireland 2016)

Physical Indicators	Physical Indicators
Cuts, bruising and lacerations Forced marriage recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling signs of self-mutilation signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness) Tired New items of clothing e.g. expensive shoes, watches or phones that they may receive (not at Christmas or Birthdays) and where you may know the family would not normally have money for such items Unable to explain why/ how they came to have these items Sudden announcement / Recent engagement (forced marriage) Change in overall behaviour, performance or	Knowledge of things beyond their year i.e. drugs, sex, pornography – may have been exposed to chronic runaway attention seeking/needing behaviour Poor peer relationships Secretive about new / older friendship groups Increase in risk taking behaviours Secretive about phone usage or not allowing anyone to see messages or any items on the pupils’ phone Possible more withdrawn in school Forced marriage signs – states about going away on a family holiday – possibly not returning Not allowed to join extra-curricular activities

punctuality	Siblings/ cousins in constant chaperone of pupil
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Domestic Violence & Abuse is threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member (Stopping Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland – A Seven Year Strategy) (March 2016)

Female Genital Mutilation

FGM is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM compromises 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 mutilation is carried out and later in life.

Forced Marriage A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in **St. Mary’s College** we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

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. Mary's College** 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.

Adult Safeguarding

An '**Adult at risk of harm**' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics and/or
- b) Life circumstances

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An '**Adult in need of protection**' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics and/or
- b) Life circumstances and
- c) Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; and
- d) Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

Children Who Display Harmful Sexual 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 normal, inappropriate, abusive or violent. Normal sexual behaviour will generally have no need for intervention, however consideration may be required as to appropriateness within

a school setting. Inappropriate 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 contact with PSNI or Social Services is required. We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2022/02 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

Abusive Sexual Behaviours are of significant concern and guidance on the management of the pupils and referrals to other agencies such as Social Services or the Police should be sought from CPSS.

Some examples of abusive sexual behaviours are victimising intent or outcome, the misuse of power, coercion and force to ensure victim compliance, they may be intrusive and may include elements of expressive violence, informed consent is lacking or is not given by the victim, for example because of their special needs or they may have been under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

Violent Sexual Behaviours are also of significant concern. They may have features of threat, force, coercion or harm to others.

Some examples of violent sexual behaviour include physically violent sexual abuse which is highly intrusive, instrumental violence which is physiologically and or sexually arousing to the perpetrator and may involve sadism.

Advice from CPSS will be required if we are aware of a young person displaying violent sexual behaviour.

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. Mary's College** 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. There are two aspects to Sexting:

1/Sexting between Individuals in a Relationship

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

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.

Children with Increased Vulnerabilities

- **Children With a Disability**

Children and young people with disabilities (i.e. any child or young person who has a physical, sensory or learning impairment or a significant health condition) may be more vulnerable to abuse and those working with children with disabilities should be aware of any vulnerability factors associated with risk of harm, and any emerging child protection issues.

Staff must be aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult. Staff and volunteers working with children with disabilities will receive training to enable them to identify and refer concerns early in order to allow preventative action to be taken.

- **Children With Limited Fluency in English**

Children whose first language is not English/Newcomer pupils should be given the opportunity to express themselves to a member of staff or other professional with appropriate language/communication skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred. DTs and other relevant school staff should seek advice and support from the EA's Intercultural Education Service if necessary. All schools should create an atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or pupils for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them.

- **Gender Identity Issues and Sexual Orientation**

Schools should strive to provide a happy environment where all young people feel safe and secure. All pupils have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation. DE requires all grant-aided schools to develop their own policy on how they will address Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the curriculum. It is via this policy that schools are expected to cover issues relating to relationships and sexuality, including those affecting LGB&T children and young people.

<https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/policies-and-guidance/supporting-transgender-young-people>

As a staff working with young people from the LGBTQ+ community we will support them to appropriately access information and support on healthy relationships and to report any concerns or risks of abuse or exploitation.

6.3 Signs and symptoms of abuse (these are outlined in Appendix 1 and shown above)

7. PROCEDURES FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO CHILD ABUSE

7.1 How a Parent Can Make a Complaint

At St Mary's College 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. 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 2. They may also seek advice or guidance from the NI Public Services Ombudsman (Tel: 0800 343 424)

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

Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a child they should not investigate – this is a matter for the Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with her and make full notes. These notes or records should be of a factual, objective nature and include what was seen, said, heard or reported, the place and time of who was present. These notes 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 need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information or from others who may have relevant information. The designated teacher may also consult with the Education Authority's designated officer for child protection or Social Services (Gateway Team) before a referral is made. 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 the Western Health & Social Services Gateway Team. She will also notify the Education Authority's 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 WELB designated officer for child protection.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in Appendix 3.

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

Do's	Dont's
• Do listen to what the child says. • Do assure the child they are not at fault. • Do explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret. • Do document exactly what the child says, using his/her exact words.	• Don't ask leading questions. • Don't put words into the child's mouth. • Don't ignore the child's behaviour. • Don't remove any clothing.

• Do remember not to promise the child confidentiality.	
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Do's	Dont's
• Stay calm • Listen • Accept • Reassure • Explain what you are going to do • Record accurately • Seek support for yourself	• Panic • Promise to keep secrets • Ask leading questions • Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily • Delay • Start to investigate • Do Nothing

Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse

The five 'Rs' are guidelines that staff should use if a child discloses any information to them

1. **RECEIVE**- *LISTEN* to the child. Do not show shock in face. Write brief notes
2. **REASSURE**- Ensure child knows they have done the right thing to report. Reassure child that they will be safe. Reassure them that their interests come first. DO NOT PROMISE CONFIDENTIALITY
3. **RESPOND** - Use open questioning techniques. Do not criticise the perpetrator. Do not ask leading questions. Explain what you have to do next and who you need to talk with
4. **RECORD**- Make notes at the time, then develop these notes into a statement as soon as possible to ensure factual information is being passed on. Do not under any circumstances photograph the child, or ask them to remove items of clothing. Do not destroy original notes
5. **REPORT**- Refer to Karen Holt. Respect confidentiality of the child

7.3 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/Designated teacher (or the deputy designated teacher if 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/Designated teacher, the Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed and he/she will ensure that necessary action is taken.

Where the matter is referred to the 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 also be informed immediately.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the agreed disciplinary procedures for teacher's, a detailed record of the complaint, signed by the Principal, shall be retained on the child's file and the file of the member of staff concerned. An entry will also be made in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints.

If, on foot of a subsequent investigation by one of the investigating agencies, the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated, the record on the file of the member of staff concerned shall be expunged, and the entry in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints deleted or struck through.

However, where disciplinary investigation or action is undertaken in the context of child protection, all details relating to the complaint and disciplinary sanction shall be maintained on the teachers file for a period of 5 years. The record on the child's file should be noted accordingly, and should be maintained indefinitely in case there should be subsequent complaints. In all other cases, the record on both the child's file and the staff member's file should be maintained indefinitely

The school's record of Child Abuse complaints will be made available to the Board of Governors/Management Committee at least annually.

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

7.4 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a volunteer

Any complaint about the conduct of a person working in the school in a voluntary capacity should be treated in the same manner as complaints against a person who is not on the school's staff, and the above procedures followed. If the Principal has any concern that a child may be at risk, the services of the volunteer should be terminated immediately.

8. ATTENDANCE AT CHILD PROTECTION CASE CONFERENCES AND CORE GROUP MEETINGS

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated teacher or Principal may be invited to attend an initial and review child protection Case Conferences or core group meeting convened by the Western Health & Social Care Trust and where possible a school representative will be in attendance. A written report will be provided for these meetings and will be compiled after discussion 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 in line with what has been agreed in each child's protection plan.

9. 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 and where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, a legal duty to report this. However, only those who need to know will be told.

Where there have been, or are current, child protection concerns about a pupil who transfers to another school we will consider what information should be shared with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school.

Where it is necessary to safeguard children information will be shared with other statutory agencies in accordance with the requirements of this policy, the school data protection policy and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

In accordance with DE guidance we must consider and develop clear guidelines for the recording, storage, retention and destruction of both manual and electronic records where they relate to child protection concerns.

In order to meet these requirements all child protection records, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in St. Mary's College are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher and Principal have access to them. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from child's date of birth plus 30 years.

If information is held electronically, whether on a PC, a laptop or on a portable memory device, all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected.

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/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

10. RECORD KEEPING

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. The DT office is locked when not in use, and all documents are safely and securely locked at all times.

If a complaint about possible child abuse is received by the school and is not referred to Social Services – or if it is referred and Social Services do not place the child's name on the Child Protection Register – a record on the child's file will be permanently preserved and a confidential copy will be sent to any school to which the child subsequently transfers.

If Social Services inform the school that a child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, a record of this fact and associated documentation from the Social Services will be maintained on the child's file while he or she continues to attend our school.

When the child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register then all Social Services records will be destroyed and only the school records retained for permanent preservation. Should a child transfer to another school whilst their name is on the Child Protection Register then we will inform the receiving school that his/her name is on the register and the name of the child's social worker. All Social Services records held by us in relation to the child will then be destroyed. The school's own child protection records in relation to the child will be held in secure and confidential storage for permanent preservation. **Please refer to Appendices 5(a) and 5 (b), 5 (c) for recording pro-formas used to record concerns.**

11. VETTING PROCEDURES

All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in the School are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

12. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF PAID OR UNPAID

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 has a code of conduct for staff which is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector.

The schools code of conduct is included as Appendix 6.

13. STAFF TRAINING

St Mary's College 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. Ms. Holt has recently received refresher training from the Education Authority.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school Child Protection/ Safeguarding Children Policy and code of conduct and given a copy of the policy which includes what to do if you are worried that a child is being abused.

14. THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM

Much of the Preventative Curriculum is delivered through Pastoral Care and in subject areas such as LLW. Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through year assemblies and there is **a permanent child protection notice board that displays child helpline numbers in the main corridor.** This notice board also displays relevant information and advice. There is also relevant information displayed throughout the school on the digital screens. The Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy is also displayed in the staffroom with a flow diagram of how a parent may make a complaint.

Every classroom has an A3 copy of the Child Protection/Safeguarding Team for St. Mary's College. Copies are displayed in the staffroom, the canteen, assembly halls, and in the FM office.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues:

- The NSPCC visits the school and provides information on a range of child protection issues through assemblies and resources.
- Other organisations are also invited in to provide information and advice on child protection issues.

A counselling service is provided for our pupils by *Links counselling service* under contract from DENI. Students can self-refer, parents can access the link to make a referral, form teachers, LSAs and teaching staff can make referrals for students. There is a QR code on Mrs. Holt's office door and students have been given assemblies to understand the referral process. Students have the web address in their daybooks. The service has been promoted on our social media sites and there is a direct link on our school website.

We may also employ the services of student or voluntary counsellors as well. The designated teacher is the contact for the service but any member of staff may refer a pupil with the pupil's agreement, using the appropriate referral form. In line with the **Gillick Principle**, the service is confidential. Permission from parents therefore will not be sought and parents will not be informed if the pupil does not wish it. Parents may however contact the school if they do not wish their child(ren) to attend counselling although in line with the **Gillick Principle** the pupil may access counselling without consent from parents. Information about the Service, including an explanation of the **Gillick Principle**, will be included in information sent to parents every year, along with our Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy when appropriate.

Our school counsellors who arrive in school on a Wednesday 9am-3.10pm have their own filing cabinet. They are the only people who have keys to the confidential cabinet. All notes are locked and stored safely. This is in line with the new Data Protection policy that has

come into effect May 2018. If a child protection issue is discussed at counselling, the child will be made aware that Ms. Holt must be informed.

15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

St Mary's College 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.

Date Policy Reviewed: January 2025

Signed: *Mrs Sarah Kelly* (Chair of Board of Governors)

Mr Brendan McGinn (Principal)

Ms Karen Holt (Designated Teacher)

16.

Operation Encompass

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

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

As an Operation Encompass school, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of the school safeguarding team. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

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

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

17. CONSENT

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 and where possible respect 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.

Students over the age of 18:

There is a difficult balance between gaining consent for a referral into Adult Protection Gateway and also ensuring a vulnerable adult is protected from harm. Consent will always be sought from the person for a referral to statutory agencies.

If consent is withheld then a referral will not be made into the Adult Protection Gateway unless there is reasonable doubt regarding the capacity of the adult to give/withhold consent. In this case contact will be made with the local Adult Protection Gateway to seek further advice.

In situations where there is reasonable doubt regarding an individual's capacity, they will be informed of the referral, unless to do so would put them at any further risk.

The principle of consent may be overridden if there is an overriding public interest, for example in the following circumstances:

- the person causing the harm is a member of staff, a volunteer or someone who only has contact with the adult at risk because they both use the service; or
- consent has been provided under undue influence, coercion or duress;
- other people are at risk from the person causing harm;

- or a crime is alleged or suspected

Appendix 1

Signs and Symptoms of abuse – possible indicators

Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
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

Neglect

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
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	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.

Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
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)	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

extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).	attention seeking/needing behaviour poor peer relationships
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Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
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	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 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 vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity exposure to pornographic material

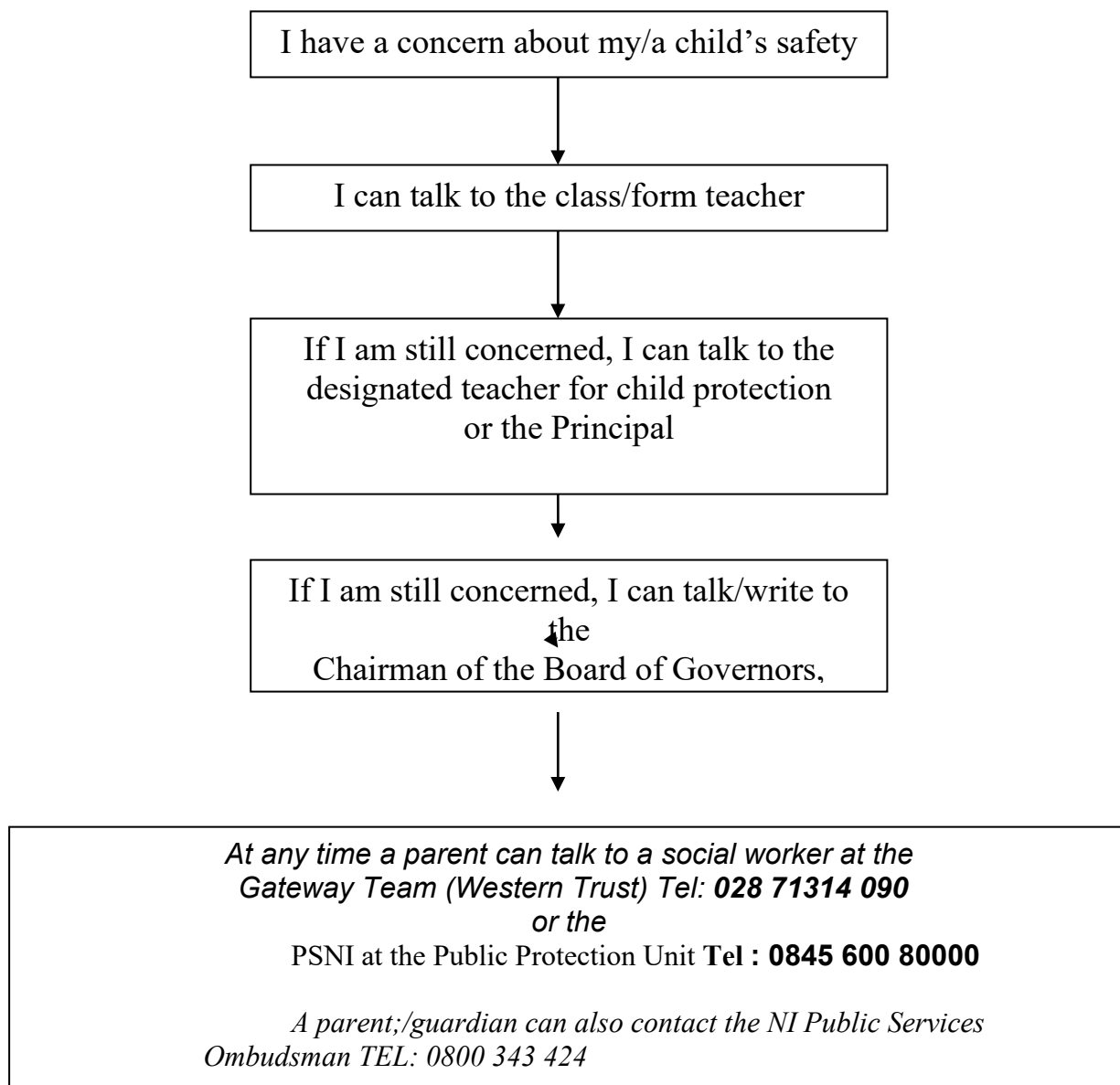
Include Exploitation & Sexual Exploitation

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Cuts, bruising and lacerations Forced marriage recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; signs of self-mutilation signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness) Tired New items of clothing e.g expensive shoes, watches or phones that they may receive (not at Christmas or Birthdays) and where you may know the family would not normally have money for such items Unable to explain why/ how they came to have these items	Knowledge of things beyond their year i.e. drugs, sex, pornography –may have been exposed to chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour Poor peer relationships Secretive about new / older friendship groups Increase in risk taking behaviours Secretive about phone usage or not allowing anyone to see messages or any items on the pupils' phone Possible more withdrawn in school Forced marriage signs – states about going

Sudden announcement / Recent engagement (forced marriage) Change in overall behaviour, performance or punctuality	away ion a family holiday – possibly not returning Not allowed to join extra-curricular activities Siblings/ cousins in constant chaperone of pupil
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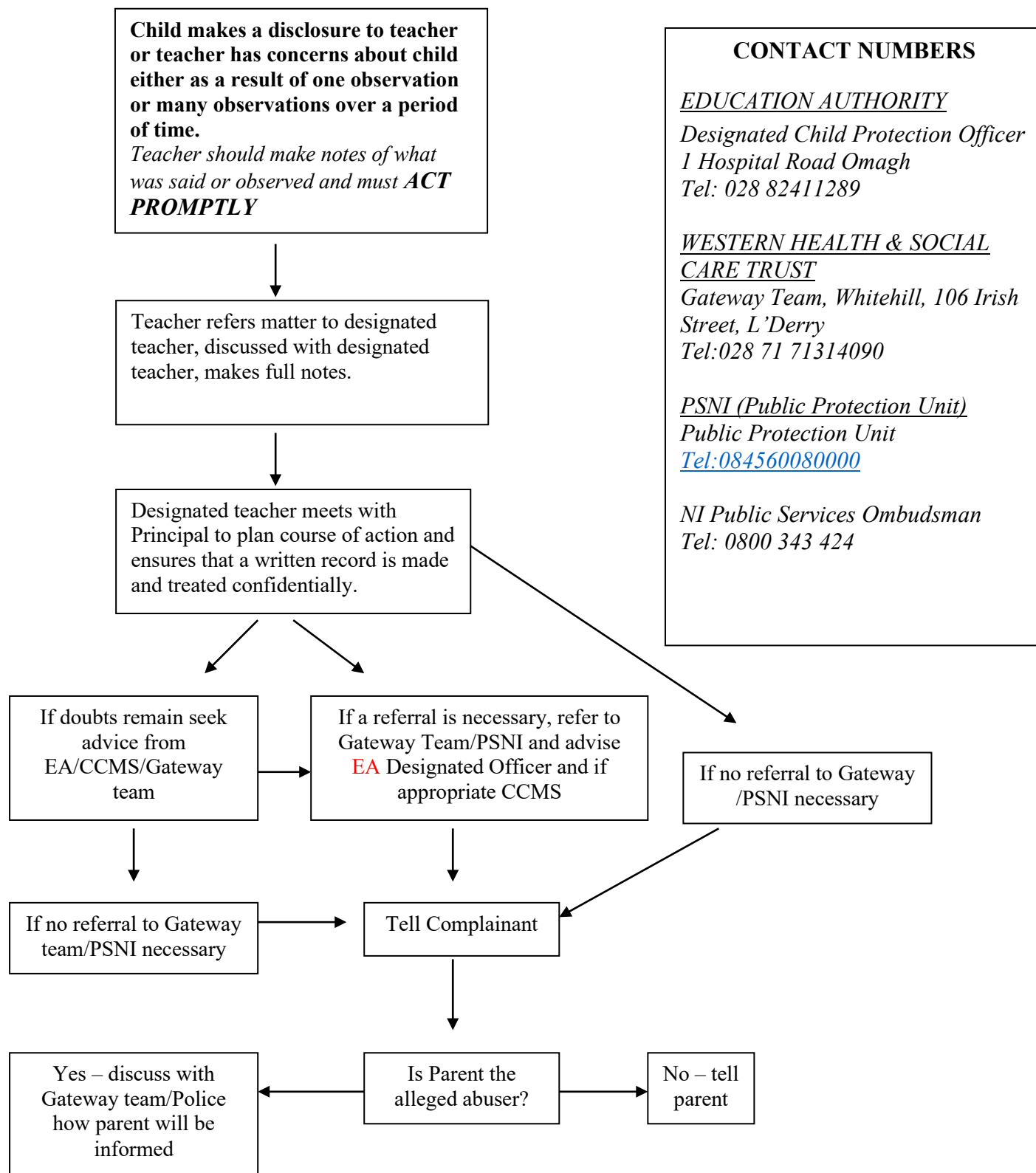
Appendix 2

How can a Parent make a Complaint?



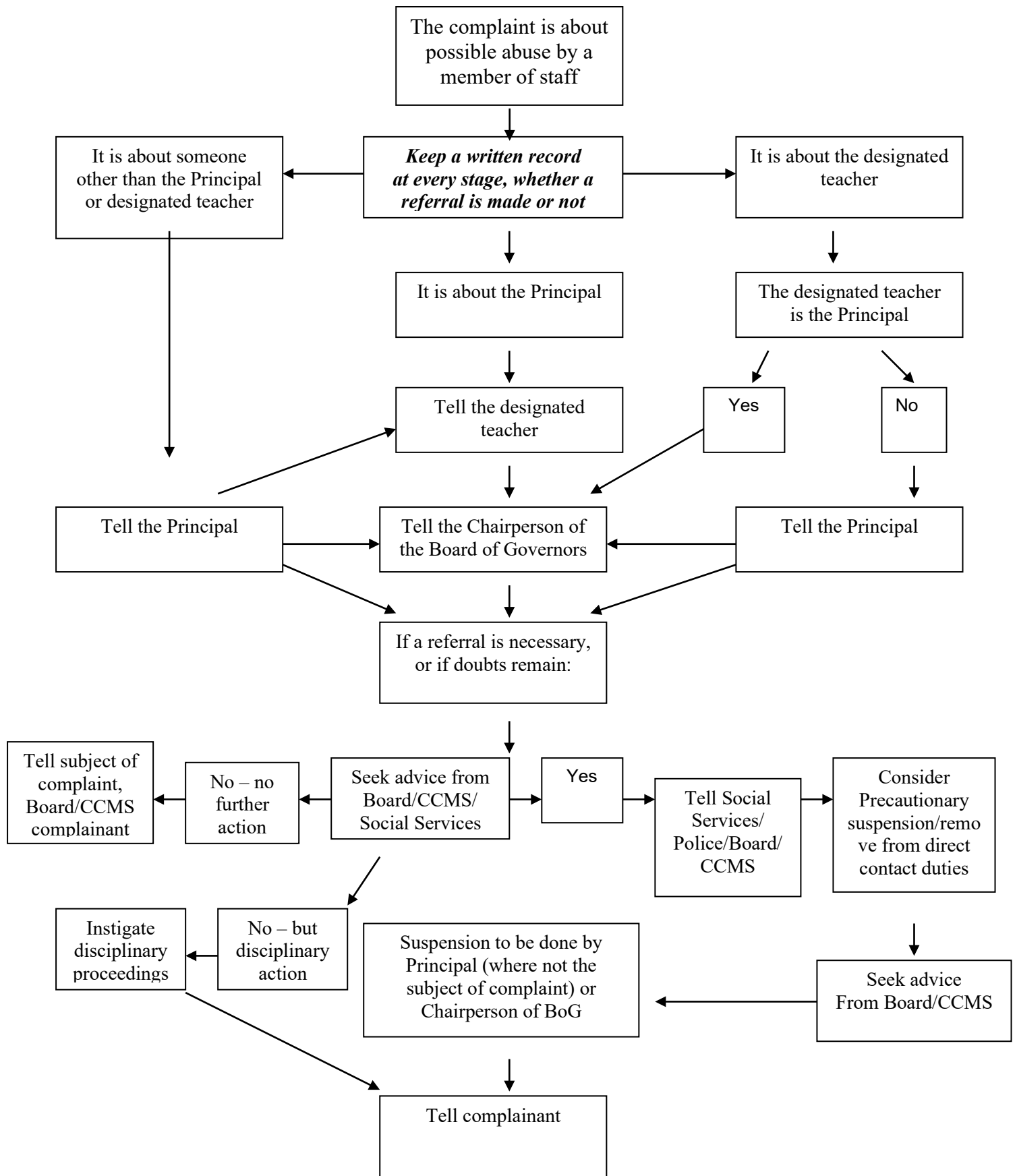
Appendix 3

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.



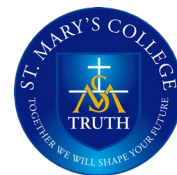
Appendix 5 (a)

SECONDARY SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION PROFILE OF CONCERNS (FORM A)

Child's Initial_____ DOB_____ Year Group_____

[illegible]



5 (b) Referral of Concern to Designated Teacher

Pupil Details

Pupil's Name:

Form Teacher:

Year Head:

Reporting Teacher:

Date:

Please state the nature of your child protection concern. be factual. include dates and people involved, where necessary. give as much detail as you are presently aware of. support expressed opinions with evidence.

Actions taken by designated teacher

Referrals to Outside Agencies? Yes / No

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

5 (c) Head of Year/Form Teacher/Subject Teachers of

Please complete the sections below on the above child. Be factual and include recent report grades (if applicable).

Thank you for your help.

K. Holt (Designated Teacher)

Attendance/Punctuality:

Behaviour:

Appearance:

Attitude and commitment:

Academic achievement to date including SEN and Predicted Grades:

Parental Involvement: **(P/T Meetings, phone calls, individual school meetings etc**

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Appendix 6

CODE OF CONDUCT

Private Meetings with Pupils

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

Physical Contact with Pupils

- As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm. If a pupil indicates that they do not wish to remove an item of clothing such as their jacket or insist on wearing a long-sleeved teeshirt for PE for example, staff should not draw unnecessary attention to the pupil but contact the designated teacher about the issue.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Staff who have to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*
- Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to his/her line manager.
- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out-of-school's activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. Schools have already received advice on the value of consulting parents and Governors when proposing to use materials such as the AIDS education for schools and in connection with sex education programmes.

If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the principal before using it.

Relationships and Attitudes

Within the Pastoral Care Policies of the school and the employing authority, staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.

Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent girls.

Contact through social media

Teachers should be aware of the possible implications of contact with pupils on social media and this is strongly discouraged. If pupils try to contact staff in this way it should be reported to the designated teacher immediately.

Conduct outside of work

- All staff and volunteers must not engage in conduct outside of work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school or the staff/volunteers own reputation or other members of the school community
- In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession of or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are to be regarded as unacceptable
- Staff may undertake work outside school, either in a paid or voluntary capacity, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school. It should not contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance in the school. Staff should seek advice from the school Principal when considering working outside the school.

Data protection only access information where only in accordance with agreed school policy or with specific permission from the Principal

Nobody has permission to access any school equipment without the policies health and safety data protection

Dress and Appearance

- All staff and volunteers must dress in an appropriate manner that is appropriate to a professional role and promote a professional image

- Clothing should not be offensive, revealing or sexually provocative
- Staff should dress in a manner that is absent from political or other contentious slogans.
- Staff must be aware that they can be disciplined if they fail to comply with this dress code of conduct

Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

From time to time it will be prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young children, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of children/young people or of their parents/guardians.

Duty of Care - Teaching and Support Staff

For the attention of: Substitute Teachers, Temporary Ancillary Staff, Short-Term Workers and any others employed in a non-permanent capacity

Child Protection is Everyone's Business

What to do if you have concerns about the well being of a child

For your own professional security, please ensure that you do not talk to the child in a closed room alone – make sure the door is open and both of you can be seen at all times by other staff/pupils

Receive – listen to what a child says but do not ask leading questions, except to show you have understood.

Reassure – ensure the child is reassured that she will be safe and her interests come first, but do not promise confidentiality. Pupils generally accept and understand why this rule exists; telling an adult they trust indicates that they want help with their problem and are ready for this significant step forward of disclosure.

React – only to ensure that the child is safe and secure. Do not use physical contact.

Pupils should be addressed formally by their Christian name. Care should be taken to avoid use of over-familiar terms, (darling, sweetheart, pet, etc) which are not appropriate in a professional context.

Record – make note of what you have seen or heard and the date and time on the Form for Reporting Concerns to the Designated Teacher (copies of this form are held in the Main office and in the Vice-Principals' office). All such information is to be treated in a confidential manner.

Report – report to the designated teacher, Ms. Holt, or the deputy-designated teachers, as soon as you have any concern about a child.

If in doubt speak to either of the above teachers for advice

A copy of the school's Child Protection Policy is available on request from the Main office or the Vice Principals' office.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's policy review cycle. Mr. Mc Ginn and Ms. Holt, at the end of each school year, will review the implementation of the policy.

I have read and understood the Child Protection Policy of St Mary's College.

Signature: _____ Date: _____