

St. Mary's Primary School



Child Protection Policy Jan 2013

Signature of Chairperson _____

Signature of Principal _____

Date _____

1. CHILD PROTECTION ETHOS

The N.I. Children's Order 1995 states "The welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration". This is the core principle of the Child Protection Policy of St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery.

We, the staff of St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery, recognise that each child has a fundamental right to be protected from harm and we will therefore do everything in our power to protect the children in our care. We acknowledge that children cannot learn effectively or develop unless they feel secure, so we will do all we can to promote the safety and well-being of our pupils.

We recognise that we 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 where they are encouraged to 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 Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Pastoral Care in Schools- Child Protection"(DENI Circular 99/10) and the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures(2005).

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection 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 Discipline/Behaviour Policy
- ❖ Anti-Bullying
- ❖ Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- ❖ Special Education Needs
- ❖ Educational Visits
- ❖ First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- ❖ Health and Safety Policy
- ❖ Sex Education
- ❖ Photographic Images of Children Policy

- ❖ Acceptable Use of The Internet and Digital Technologies Policy
- ❖ ICT and access to the internet
- ❖ Intimate Care Policy
- ❖ Pastoral Care Policy

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing a copy should contact the School Principal or visit the school website at www.stmarypsmelmount.com

4. SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING TEAM

The following are members of the schools Safeguarding team:

- ❖ Chair of the Board of Governors, Ms Liz Kavanagh,
- ❖ Designated Governor for Child Protection, Mr Mark Quigley ,
- ❖ Designated Teacher, Mrs Flanagan- Senior site
- ❖ Designated Teacher, Mrs Roarty- Junior site,
- ❖ Deputy Designated Teachers (Nursery) Mrs Mary Conlan and Mrs Sinead Johnston
- ❖ Principal/Deputy Designated Teacher, Mrs O' Doherty

5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Chair of The Board Of Governors – Ms. Liz Kavanagh

The Chair of the Board of Governors must:

- ❖ Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment
- ❖ Ensure that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy
- ❖ Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment & selection training provided by the WELB Child Protection Support Service for Schools, the WELB 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.

5.2 The Designated Governor For Child Protection – Mr Mark Quigley

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

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

5.3 The Board of Governors

Board of Governors must ensure:

- ❖ that the school has a Child Protection 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 – Mrs O’ Doherty

The Principal must ensure that:-

- ❖ DENI 1999 / 10 is implemented within the school
- ❖ That a designated teacher and deputy are appointed
- ❖ That all staff receive child protection training
- ❖ That all necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- ❖ That the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (and the Board of Governors) is kept informed
- ❖ That child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors meetings (termly updates & annual report)
- ❖ That the school child protection policy is reviewed annually and that parents and pupils receive a copy of this policy at least once every 2 years.
- ❖ That confidentiality is paramount, information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.

5.5 The Designated Teachers, Mrs Flanagan and Mrs Roarty and the Deputy Designated Teachers, Mrs O’ Doherty (Principal) Mrs Conlon and Mrs Johnston(St Mary’s Nursery)

The designated teachers and deputies 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 Western Education & Library Board designated officers for Child Protection and CCMS Senior Management Officer.
- ❖ Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- ❖ Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection.

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.

5.7 The Parents

Parents should play their part in Child Protection by:

- ❖ telephoning the school on the morning of their child’s absence, and 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 Policies;
- ❖ reporting to the office when they visit the school;
- ❖ raising concerns they have in relation to their child with the school.

6. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

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.”

6.2 Types of Abuse

There are four categories of abuse:

- ❖ **Neglect**
- ❖ **Physical**
- ❖ **Emotional**
- ❖ **Sexual**

NEGLECT

- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm.
- It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision.
- It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.
- This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.
- It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of the other person.
- It may involve causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child.
- Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

SEXUAL ABUSE

- Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities.
- The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.
- They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

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

7. PROCEDURES FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO CHILD ABUSE

7.1 How a Parent can Make a Complaint

At St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of our children'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 Chairperson 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**.

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

If a pupil makes a disclosure to any member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if any member of staff has concerns about a pupil, the member of staff must act promptly.

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 factual, objective nature and include what was seen, said, heard or reported, the place and time of 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 the 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 Western Education & Library Board'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 Western Education & Library Board’s designated officer for child protection and

the CCMS Senior Management Officer. 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 our staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.

Do	Don’t
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Do remember not to promise the child confidentiality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Don’t
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm • Listen • Accept • Reassure • Explain what you are going to do • Record accurately • Seek support for yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panic • Promise to keep secrets • Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily • Delay • Start to investigate • Do Nothing

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 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 Chairperson 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 education establishment's disciplinary procedures, a summary is entered on a Record of Abuse Complaints. This entry which will contain details of the complaint, will be made available to the Board of Governors 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 teachers 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.

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.

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 the 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 schools 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) 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 our children must uphold the best interests of the child as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the child/ren 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 our children gain from positive interaction with the staff within our school.

The schools code of conduct is included as **Appendix 6**.

12. STAFF TRAINING

St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. All staff have updated their Child Protection training. The Principal, Designated Teacher and a member of SMT completed more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities re Child Protection. All staff will receive annual refresher training. The Principal (Deputy Designated Teacher), Designated teachers, Chairperson of the Board of

Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school Child Protection 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

St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery has a commitment to safeguarding our pupils and equipping them with skills so that they understand their rights to have their welfare considered paramount in all decisions taken about them. Sessions in Circle Time and PDMU 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 class assemblies and there is a **permanent child protection notice board in the main corridor and relevant information in each classroom and along the corridors**, 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:

- A counsellor from Barnardos working in school.
Due to financial constraints this provision is no longer sustainable . This will be reviewed in the next school year. The use of 'Worry Boxes ' will continue to support the needs of all children as well as liaising with external support agencies.
- Primary 5 pupils take part in the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service talks on Fire Safety.
- Safety Talks from PSNI targeting Years 5-7

15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually and amended in the light of any new legislation and in line with DENI circulars. Our Pastoral Care leaflet incorporating the school's arrangements for Child Protection is issued to parents on a two year cycle.

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.

Following consultation with staff review of this policy was undertaken in August 2013. Amendments to the policy are depicted in red print.