



St. Mary's Grammar School, Belfast

POLICY: **SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION**

June 2016

(Reviewed June 2017)



Aisling Award Winner



St Mary's Grammar School

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

June 2016

INTRODUCTION

St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School strives to educate all its pupils within an environment where the Catholic traditions of learning, truth, justice, respect and community are promoted. Our central ethos positions the welfare of each pupil as paramount.

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that our pupils receive effective support, protection and justice.

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school.

This policy does not exist in isolation. It should be read in conjunction with the schools Behaviour Management Policy and Acceptable Use Policy.

School policy and practice in this area shall take cognizance of the legislative and human rights context, which determines our procedures and responses.

The rights of the child which are enshrined in the:

- Children (NI) Order 1995
- European Convention on Human Rights (Human Rights Act 1998)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

provide a legislative framework and guidance for our policy and its practical operation.

The Education Order (NI) 1998 and Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003 set out obligations on schools including the promotion of self discipline, the necessity of consulting with parents and pupils and the prevention of all forms of bullying.

A range of statutory and non statutory guidance materials will guide policies and practice in this area.

Some of these are listed below:

- Pastoral Care in schools: promoting Positive Behaviour
- DE Circular 2003/13
- Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools A Guide for Schools 2017
- "Bullying – don't suffer in silence" DFES (2002)
- Area Child Protection Committees Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this policy is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our care. In situations where child abuse is suspected, our paramount responsibility is to the child.

This will be achieved by:

- Continuing to develop awareness in all staff of the need for Child Protection (particular care should be taken with children with disabilities and SEN) and their responsibilities in identifying abuse.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of referral procedures within the school.
- Monitoring children who have been identified as 'at risk'.
- Ensuring that outside agencies are involved where appropriate.
- Ensuring that key concepts of Child Protection are integrated within the curriculum especially via PSHE.
- Creating an environment where children feel secure, have their viewpoints valued, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.

The term 'abuse' covers **neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and emotional abuse.** (**Appendix 3**)

The policy is a statement of the school's commitment to ensuring that no abuse is suffered at school and that abuse suffered outside school, when detected, is dealt with appropriately.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

- Mrs Fiona Crookes, Vice Principal, is the teacher designated to have specific responsibility for Child Protection.
- Mrs Amanda Barr, Senior Teacher, assumes the responsibility when the designated teacher is absent or unavailable.

If both Mrs Crookes and Mrs Barr are absent the matter should then be referred to another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

- Mr Paul Cooper is the member of the Board of Governors with responsibility for Child Protection.
- Members of staff, both teaching and ancillary, are aware of the designations.
- The process of recruitment and appointment of staff must include a check of the possible criminal background of people who are likely to have substantial unsupervised access to children.
- Information for parents/guardians of school procedures will be regularly published (normally in the summer post) (**Appendix 1**).
- In the professional contact with pupils (**Appendix 2**), teachers must protect themselves especially when meeting on a one to one basis with students and all staff should bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued (please refer to the School's **Safe Handling Policy**). Teachers who hear an allegation of abuse against another member of staff should report the matter immediately to the **Designated Teacher**.

- All members of staff, both teaching and ancillary, are made aware of the types and symptoms of possible abuse (**Appendix 3**). They are encouraged to be vigilant and to alert the **Designated**

Teacher of any suspicion of abuse. Where signs of abuse indicate the mere possibility of abuse and there is no allegation, or even firm suspicion, then the situation will be monitored carefully but discretely either to allay or confirm initial concerns. **Allegations of child abuse must always be given the highest priority.**

➤ Where abuse is suspected by a teacher he/she will refer to the **Designated Teacher**, but may first seek clarification from the child. Questioning should be for clarification purposes only and at no time should leading questions be asked. Notes of any allegations must be taken for future referral. The child will be assured that information offered will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know but **no undertaking of confidentiality can be given by any teacher.**

➤ Where abuse is suspected by non-teaching staff it is to be reported to the **Designated Teacher.**

➤ In all cases where abuse is suspected, or where an allegation has been made, the **Designated Teacher** will inform the Principal and will refer the case(s) to, or consult with, social services. Where physical or sexual abuse is suspected or alleged, the case(s) will be referred to the Police. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will also be notified. The guidance and procedures set out in Circular 2015/13 will be followed in these instances.

➤ Where the Principal is suspected or alleged to have abused a child, the **Designated Teacher** will report the matter immediately to social services, the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and, if appropriate, to the Police.

➤ Where the **Designated Teacher** is suspected or alleged to have abused a child the member of staff who first becomes aware of a possible offence will approach the **Deputy Designated Teacher** who, in turn, will inform the **Principal** immediately.

➤ In every case where a serious complaint is made against a member of staff, the Principal, or Chairperson of the Board of Governors, as appropriate, will inform the complainant, if necessary on a regular basis, of the investigations which have been, or are being, made and their outcome.

➤ The above reporting and referral procedures will also be employed in cases of **peer sexual abuse.**

➤ Complying with these procedures ensures that you will receive full support and will not be legally or financially liable.

In all cases where there is reasonable suspicion that a member of staff has been involved in a case of abusing a pupil that member of staff will be suspended with pay from duty pending a full investigation (if deemed proportionate or alternative safeguarding measures will be put in place pending a full investigation) and, if deemed necessary, legal prosecution.

All members of staff have been made aware of the procedures outlined above (**Appendix 4**).

An aspect of Child Protection is bullying which is **never** acceptable in any of its manifestations and the School has a number of infra-structural measures to prevent it and a procedure for dealing with any instances of it.

- ❖ The school provides a structured **counselling support service affording every pupil the opportunity to approach any support teacher at any time.** Family Works Counselling counsellors work in the school.

- ❖ All teachers are encouraged to be vigilant to detect instances of bullying and to be alert for pupils displaying symptoms of being a victim of bullying.
- ❖ Any approach by those with parental authority concerning knowledge or suspicion of bullying is taken seriously and investigated.
- ❖ Peers raising concerns for a fellow pupil re bullying have their concerns fully explored.
- ❖ Each class in Years 8-12 have a P.S.E period each week. A substantial portion of the programme followed is directly or indirectly focused on bullying issues.
- ❖ The programme of study followed by each class in Years 13-14 non-examination RS classes has a significant component devoted to bullying issues and conflict resolution.
- ❖ Outside agencies are invited to the school for appropriate student learning opportunities.

The school's **Anti-Bullying Policy** clarifies our approach to preventing and dealing with instances of bullying.

DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

If a child chooses to tell a member of staff about possible abuse there are a number of things that should be done to support the child:

- stay calm and be available to listen
- listen with the utmost care to what the child is saying
- question normally without pressurising
- do not interrogate or put words into the child's mouth
- take brief notes and record times, dates and content of disclosure
- do not make promises other than assuring the child of school support
- reassure the child and let them know they were right to inform us
- inform the child that this information will now have to be passed on
- follow our school procedures
- immediately inform the **Designated Teacher**
- seek the advice of the **Designated Teacher** if the child is too distressed to continue in school
- know and accept your limitations and realise that the **Designated Teacher** is in place to provide appropriate support for the pupil and for you.

MONITORING AND RECORD KEEPING

It is essential that accurate records be kept where there are concerns about the welfare of a child. These records should then be kept in secure, confidential files, which are separate from the child's school records.

Staff must keep the **Designated Teacher** informed of:

- poor attendance & punctuality
- concerns about appearance and dress
- changed or unusual behaviour from normal
- concerns about health and emotional well being
- deterioration in educational progress
- discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child
- concerns about home conditions or situations
- concerns about pupil on pupil abuse (including serious bullying).

When there is suspicion of significant harm to a child and a referral is made as much information as possible should be given about the nature of the suspicions, the child and the family. Use of previous records (if available) may prove to be particularly useful in this respect.

A copy of any referral to Social Services must be kept on the confidential school File. A note must be made of the Duty Social Worker and the time at which the call is made. Parents should be informed of any school referrals.

Reports may be needed for Child Protection Case conferences or the criminal/civil courts. Consequently records and reports should be:

- factual (no opinions)
- non-judgemental (no assumptions)
- clear
- accurate
- relevant.

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

- To ensure that all staff know the **Designated Teacher** is responsible (and in his/her absence the **Deputy Designated Teacher**) for Child Protection issues.
- To refer promptly all cases of suspected child abuse to the Gateway Team, Social Services or the PSNI Central Referral Unit. If a parent arrives to collect the child before the social worker has arrived then it must be remembered that we have no right to prevent the removal of the child. However, if there are clear signs of physical risk or threat, the Police should be called.
- To maintain and update as necessary the Child Protection Monitoring List.
- To organise regular training to all staff on Child Protection within the School.
- To ensure that all staff know about and have access to protection guidelines.
- To co-ordinate action where child abuse is suspected.
- To facilitate and support the development of a whole school policy on Child Protection.
- To attend case conferences or nominate an appropriate member of staff to attend on his/her behalf.
- Maintain records of case conferences and other sensitive information in a secure confidential file and to disseminate information about the child only on a “need to know basis”.
- To pass on records and inform the key worker when a child who is on the Child Protection register leaves the school. The custodian of the register must also be informed.
- To raise staff awareness and confidence on child protection procedures and to ensure new staff are aware of these procedures.
- To keep up to date with current practice by participating in training opportunities wherever possible.
- To ensure consistency with the ‘Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – A Guide for Schools 2017.
- To make a yearly report to the Board of Governors (**Appendix 5**).

Appendix 1

March 2014

Dear Parent(s) / Guardian(s)

Our most recent Pastoral Inspection of January 2004, February 2007, March 2009 and November 2012 complimented our pastoral structures for their effectiveness and accessibility to pupils and parents.

One important aspect of this Pastoral provision is our procedures for dealing with a Child Protection issue. Overleaf is a flowchart outlining how you or your son might approach the school with any concern in this area. As a staff we are committed to dealing with all approaches promptly and sensitively.

Please note that Mrs Fiona Crookes (Pastoral Vice-Principal) is our Designated Teacher for Child Protection and that Mr Mark Robinson (Senior Teacher) is our Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection. Mr Paul Cooper is our governor with responsibility for Child Protection.

It is important that these structures for referral are in place although it is our common wish that they need never be called upon. At all times, we recognise that the pupils in our charge have a fundamental right to be protected from harm and we will continue to work in partnership with home to promote this safeguard system.

Yours faithfully

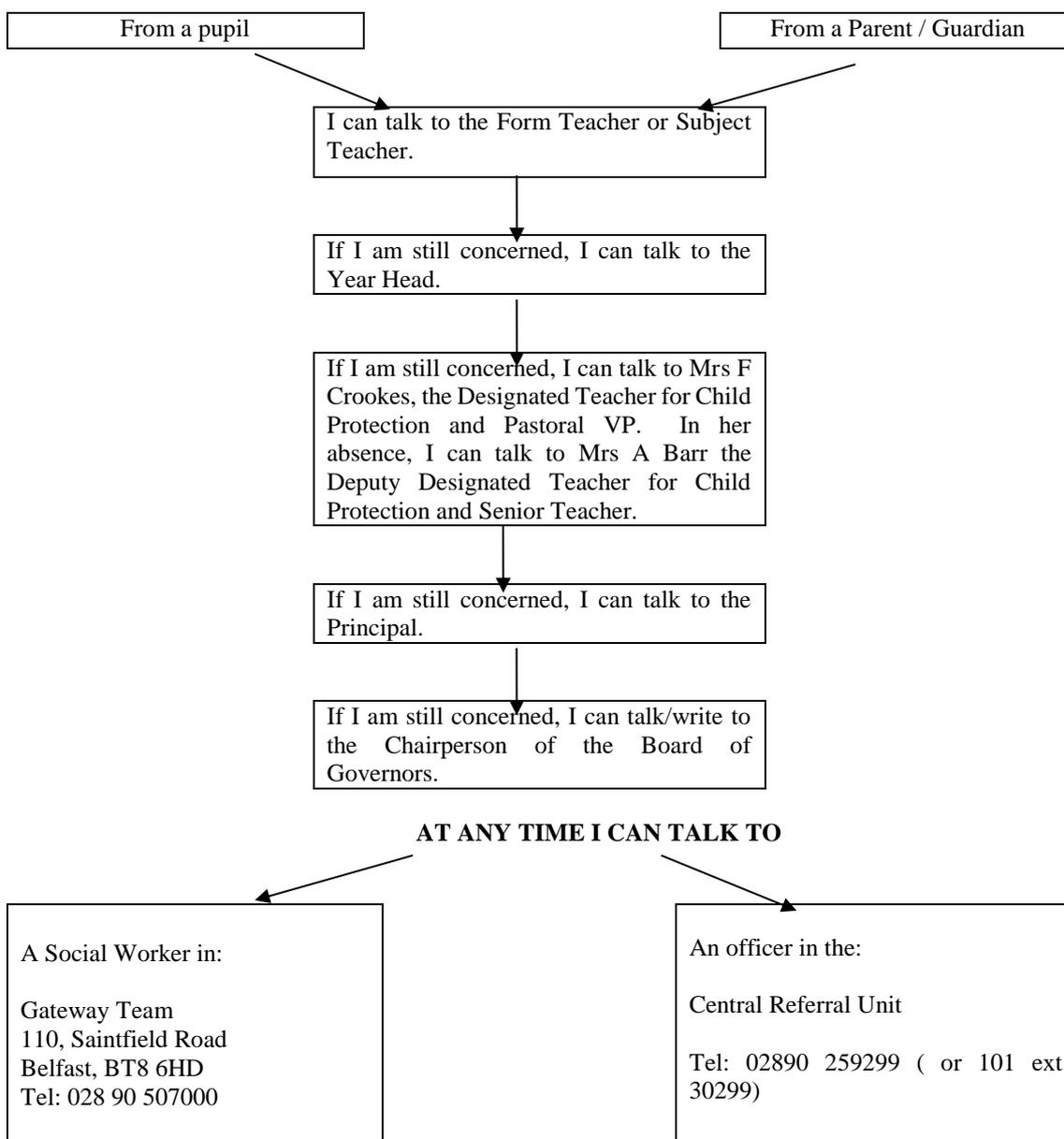
John Martin
Principal

Appendix 1 (continued)

St Mary's Grammar School CHILD PROTECTION

Alerting St Mary's to a concern about safety

Pupils and parents can bypass the first two layers and go straight to Mrs F Crookes if they feel it is appropriate.



Appendix 2

A Code of Conduct for Staff of St. Mary's Grammar School Belfast

Introduction

All actions concerning our students 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 our students in their charge must be above any reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences our students gain from positive interaction with staff. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

Code of Conduct

1. 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 or obscuring windows.
- ❖ Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

2. 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 that 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.
- ❖ However, it is essential that any contact should be appropriate. Ensure that any physical contact, or indeed anything said or implied, cannot be misconstrued as a threat or a sexual overture.
- ❖ Physical contact, abusive language or threatening behaviour must not be a part of an overall personal system of discipline.
- ❖ Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.

DENI Circular 1999/9, on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (Power of member of staff to restrain pupils).

- ❖ 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 the Designated Teacher.

- ❖ Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school 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 environment.

3. 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.
- ❖ If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the **Designated Teacher** before using it.

4. Relationships and Attitudes

Within the Pastoral Care Policies of the school, staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, 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 is dealing with adolescent boys.

Conclusion

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

In all circumstances, professional judgement of staff will be exercised and for the vast majority of staff this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If staff have any doubts about points in this document, or how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult the Designated Teacher.

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

Appendix 3

What is safeguarding?

The definition of safeguarding used in the Education & Libraries Order 2003 can be summarised as:

- protecting children and learners from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's and learners' health or development
- ensuring that children and learners are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- undertaking that role so as to enable those children and learners to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE AND THEIR SYMPTOMS

Child abuse can be categorised as follows

- **Physical Abuse**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Exploitation**
- **Emotional Abuse**
- **Neglect**
- **Grave Concern/at risk** - this is not a distinct category and is dealt with separately.

These different types of abuse require different approaches. A child suffering from physical abuse may be in immediate and serious danger. Action should, therefore, be taken immediately. With other forms of abuse there is a need to ensure that adequate information is gathered. There is also a need to make sure that grounds for suspicion have been adequately investigated and recorded. The need to collate information must be balanced against the need for urgent action. If there are reasonable grounds for suspicion then a decision to monitor the situation should only be taken after consultation.

Each of the categories will now be explored in more detail.

Physical Abuse:

is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Typical signs of Physical Abuse are:

- bruises and abrasions - especially about the face, head, genitals or other parts of the body where they would not be expected to occur given the age of the child. Some types of bruising are particularly characteristic of non-accidental injury especially when the child's explanation does not match the nature of injury or when it appears frequently
- slap marks — these may be visible on cheeks or buttocks
- twin bruises on either side of the mouth or cheeks - can be caused by pinching or grabbing, sometimes to make a child eat or to stop a child from speaking
- bruising on both sides of the ear — this is often caused by grabbing a child who is attempting to run away. It is very painful to be held by the ear as well as humiliating and this is a common injury
- grip marks on arms or trunk - gripping bruises on arm or trunk can be associated with shaking a child. Shaking can cause one of the most serious injuries to a child (a brain haemorrhage as the brain hits the inside of the skull). X-rays and other tests are required to fully diagnose the effects of shaking. Grip marks can also be indicative of sexual abuse
- black eyes – are mostly commonly caused by an object such as a fist coming into contact with the eye socket. However, a heavy bang on the nose can cause bruising to spread around the eye but a doctor will be able to tell if this has occurred
- damage to the mouth – e.g. bruised/cut lips or torn skin where the upper lip joins the mouth
- bite marks
- fractures
- poisoning or other misuse of drugs – e.g. overuse of sedatives
- lack of treatment of illness
- repeated visits to hospital or a delay in reporting major injury
- burns and/or scalds – a round, red burn on tender, non-protruding parts like the mouth, inside arms and on the genitals will almost certainly have been deliberately inflicted. Any burns that appear to be cigarette burns should be cause for concern. Some types of scalds known as 'dipping scalds' are always cause for concern. Skin splashes are caused when a child accidentally knocks over a hot cup of tea. In contrast a child who has been deliberately 'dipped' in a hot bath will not have splash marks.

Sexual Abuse:

occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Typical signs of Sexual Abuse are:

- a detailed sexual knowledge inappropriate to the age of the child
- behaviour that is excessively affectionate or sexual towards other children or adults
- attempts to inform by making a disclosure about the sexual abuse often begin by the initial sharing of limited information with an adult. It is also very characteristic of such children that they have an excessive pre-occupation with secrecy and try to bind the adults to secrecy or confidentiality
- a fear of medical examinations
- a fear of being alone - this applies to friends/family/neighbours/baby-suffers, etc.
- a sudden loss of appetite, compulsive eating, anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa
- excessive masturbation
- promiscuity
- sexual approaches or assaults - on other children or adults
- urinary tract infections (UTI) and/or sexually transmitted disease (STD) are all cause for immediate concern if found in children
- bruising to the buttocks, lower abdomen, thighs and genital/rectal areas. Bruises may be confined to grip marks where a child has been held so that sexual abuse can take place
- discomfort or pain particularly in the genital or anal areas
- the drawing of pornographic or sexually explicit images.

Exploitation:

is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Emotional Abuse:

is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

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.

Typical signs of Neglect are:

- Underweight - a child may be frequently hungry or pre-occupied with food or in the habit of stealing food or with the intention of procuring food. There is particular cause for concern where a persistently underweight child gains weight when away from home, for example, when in hospital or on a school trip. Some children also lose weight or fail to gain weight during school holidays when school lunches are not available and this is a cause for concern
- Inadequately clad - a distinction needs to be made between situations where children are inadequately clad, dirty or smelly because they come from homes where neatness and cleanliness are unimportant and those where the lack of care is preventing the child from thriving.

Physical Neglect is a difficult category because it involves the making of a judgement about the seriousness of the degree of neglect. Much parenting falls short of the ideal but it may be appropriate to invoke child protection procedure in the case of neglect where the child's development is being adversely affected.

Grave Concern/At risk:

This is not a separate category of child abuse as such but covers a number of situations where a child may be at risk. Children whose situations do not currently fit the above categories but where social and medical assessments indicate that they are at significant

risk of abuse. Grave concern may be felt where a child shows symptoms of stress and distress (see below) and any of the following circumstances apply:

- there is a known child abuser in the family
- another child in the family is known to have been abused
- the parents are involved with pornographic material to an unusual degree
- there is an adult in the family with a history of violent behaviour
- the child is exposed to potential risk or exploitation via the Internet e.g. pornographic material or chat rooms.

The Symptoms of Stress and Distress:

When a child is suffering from any one or more of the previous four 'categories of abuse', or if the child is 'at risk', he will nearly always suffer from and possibly display signs of stress and distress as listed below:

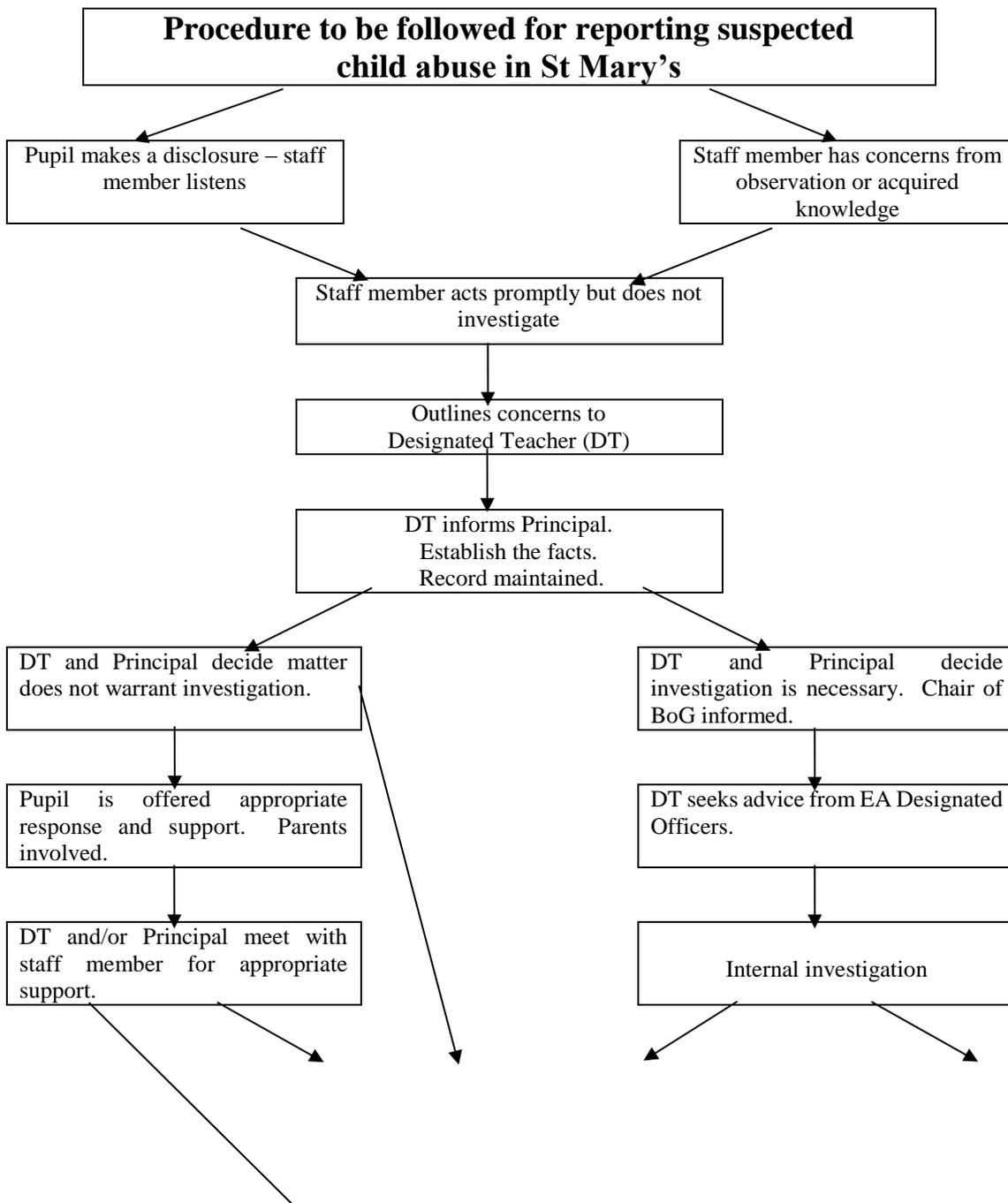
- a lack of concentration and a fall-off in school performance
- aggressive or hostile behaviour
- moodiness, depression, irritability, listlessness, fearfulness, tiredness, temper tantrums, short concentration span, withdrawn or crying at minor occurrences
- difficulties in relationships with peers
- regression to more immature forms of behaviour, e.g. thumb sucking;
- self harming or suicidal behaviour
- low self esteem
- wariness, insecurity, running away or truancy - children who persistently run away from home may be escaping from sexual physical abuse
- disturbed sleep
- general personality changes such as unacceptable behaviour or severe attention seeking behaviour
- social isolation: the child plays alone and withdraws into a private world
- indifference to separation from family
- a sudden change in school performance.

Parental Signs of Child Abuse:

Particular forms of parental behaviour that could raise or reinforce concerns are:

- offering implausible explanations of injuries
- showing unwillingness to seek appropriate medical treatment for injuries
- keeping an injured child away from school until injuries have healed without adequate reason
- displaying a high level of expressed hostility to the child
- displaying a general dislike of child-like behaviour
- labelling inappropriately a child's behaviour as bad
- leaving children unsupervised when they are too young to be left unattended.

Appendix 4



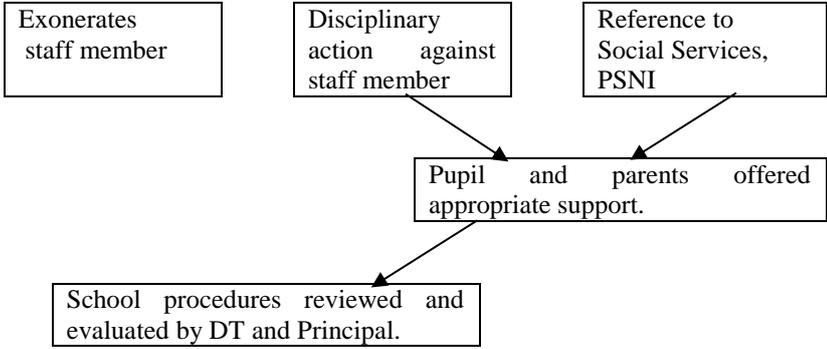
Exonerates
staff member

Disciplinary
action against
staff member

Reference to
Social Services,
PSNI

Pupil and parents offered
appropriate support.

School procedures reviewed and
evaluated by DT and Principal.



Appendix 5

Child Protection Complaint Book

Date of complaint	Details of complaint	Who made Complaint?	Against whom is the complaint?	Formally referred? To whom? Date of referral	School's Disciplinary Procedure invoked? If so, action taken?

Approvals

- Signatures:

Principal

Chair of Governors

- Date of approval by Governors:

___ / ___ / _____

- Date of next annual review:

___ / ___ / _____