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## SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

September 2022

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BELFAST  
ROYAL  
ACADEMY

<b>Title</b>	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Guidance for all stakeholders regarding:</p> <p>Definitions of risk under the heading of Safeguarding and Child Protection;</p> <p>Measures the School has in place to safeguard pupils;</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities of School staff and governors;</p> <p>The procedures to be followed where a pupil of the School may be at risk of harm.</p>
<b>Purpose</b>	To ensure an effective response to Safeguarding and Child Protection issues by the whole School community.
<b>Operational Date</b>	September 2022
<b>Next Review Date</b>	February 2023
<b>Author</b>	Vice Principal (Pastoral)

<b>To be posted on School website</b>	Yes
<b>Date posted</b>	September 2022

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## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

Belfast Royal Academy aims to ensure the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment for pupils of the School. Everyone who works in the School - teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers - has clear guidance on the action which is required where a pupil may be at risk of harm. In accordance with the Children (NI) Order 1995, the welfare of the pupil will be the paramount consideration in all decisions taken about him/her by staff of the school.

The School will maintain a range of policies whose aims are to safeguard all pupils and to promote resilience and positive behaviour. These policies may be viewed on the School web site in the Policies section.

All staff - teaching, non-teaching and voluntary – will have, before employment begins, undergone the ACCESSNI vetting process. The School Examination's Policy gives specific guidance in relation to Invigilators for all external examinations.

The staff of the School have adopted a Code of Conduct for behaviour towards pupils. This Code is set out in Appendix 1.

All visitors to the school are expected to report to the General Office where they will be provided with a lanyard identifying them as a guest. Staff are asked to challenge any unfamiliar person on school premises who is not wearing a lanyard.

### **Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, “Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland” (DHSSPSNI, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools” Circular 2017/04 (amended September 2019; updated June 2020, updated June 2022) and the SBNI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

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

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

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

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Anti-cyberbullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Drugs Disciplinary Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Critical Incident Policy
- Guidelines on the Use of Safe Handling
- Health and Safety
- Child Protection Records Management Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- Special Educational Needs
- Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy

## **SECTION 2: SAFEGUARDING TEAM 2022-23**

**Chairperson of Board of Governors:** Dr M Bill

**Vice Chairperson of Board of Governors:** Mr D Walsh

**Designated Governor for Child Protection:** Mrs A Clements

**Principal:** Mrs H Woods

**Designated Teacher:** Mr T Hughes

**Deputy Designated Teachers:** Mrs K McIntyre/Mr C McCarey/Mrs J McNally

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors, through the Designated Governor for Child Protection, shall ensure that the application of this policy is monitored and that reports are made to the Board of Governors by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection at least annually.

A Safeguarding Committee drawn from the Safeguarding Team will meet regularly to discuss and reflect on safeguarding issues. In 2022-2023, the Safeguarding Committee will consist of Mrs Clements, Mrs Woods, Mr Hughes, Mrs McIntyre, Mr McCarey and Mrs McNally.

Any person may make contact with a member of the Safeguarding Team through the School telephone number **(028) 9074 0423**. The Chairperson or Vice Chairperson of the Board of Governors may be contacted through the Bursar, Mr S Burrows. If he is unavailable, then contact should be made through the Principal's Secretary. All contacts will be dealt with in a strictly confidential manner.

Contact should be made with CPSS for advice and support as soon as concerns of a safeguarding and/or child protection nature arise, as per DE Circular 2017/04, 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools - A Guide for Schools', updated 2019.

**Outside school hours or in case of emergency, advice or assistance may be available from:**

**Belfast Gateway Service – (Monday – Friday, 9.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.): 028 9050 7000**

**Belfast Gateway Service - Emergency Out of Hours number: 028 9504 9999**

**PSNI – 101 or in the case of an emergency 999**

### **SECTION 3: CHILD PROTECTION DEFINITIONS**

#### **Definition of Harm**

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

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 abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

Although the harm from the 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.

**Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm.**

Harm can be caused by:

**Neglect**

**Physical abuse**

**Sexual abuse**

**Emotional abuse**

**Exploitation**

**Neglect:** the failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to cause significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or 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.

**Physical abuse:** 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.

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

**Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he/she is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he/she meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child frequently to 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 harm.

Child abuse occurs in families from all social classes and cultures and it also occurs in agencies and organisations. Abusers come from all walks of life and all occupations and professions. Children may be abused by a family member, a carer (i.e., a person who has actual custody of a child), an acquaintance or a stranger, who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act, or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both. For the remainder of this document, a parent will be deemed to be any person with parental responsibility for a pupil of the School.

### **Exploitation**

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.

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

### **Specific Types of Abuse**

In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse that Belfast Royal Academy are aware of and have therefore included them in our policy.

#### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online.

Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation, but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know – for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and young people do not understand that they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse.

#### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

FGM involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

#### **Forced Marriage**

A Forced Marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor.

## **Honour Based Violence**

The term 'Honour based violence' is used to refer to a range of violent practices used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to sustain or promote perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative or another has shamed, or may shame, the family and/or community by breaking their 'honour code'. The punishment can include assault, abduction, restrictions of liberty, confinement, threats and murder.

## **Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)**

Harm may be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. Fabricated or induced illness by parents or carers can cause significant harm to children. FII involves a well-child being presented by a carer as ill or disabled, or an ill or disabled child being presented with a more significant problem than he or she has in reality and suffering harm or potentially suffering harm as a consequence.

## **Abusive Images of Children**

The production of abusive images of children can involve contact sexual abuse of children and/or the manipulation of innocent images, including video, film or photographic data. Such images are often distributed for sexual gratification and sometimes for financial gain. Modern technology has become a key mechanism for distributing abusive images of children and/or young people.

## **Misuse of Digital Technologies**

Children and young people who generate and share sexually explicit images of themselves or others are committing a criminal offence. This is sometimes referred to as 'sexting' and involves the exchange of self-generated sexually explicit images, through mobile picture messages or webcams over the internet. 'Sexting' can also refer to written messages.

## **Domestic Violence and Abuse**

Domestic violence and abuse can have a profoundly negative effect on a child's emotional, psychological and social well-being. A child does not have to directly witness domestic violence to be adversely affected by it. Living in a violent or abusive domestic environment is harmful to children. Children can witness domestic violence and abuse directly and indirectly between their carers and/or the effects of it; this frequently constitutes emotional abuse and can have profoundly damaging effects on a child's or young person's well-being. Young people may experience domestic violence and abuse in their own relationships.

## **Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between normal childhood and adolescent sexual development and experimentation, and sexually inappropriate abusive or aggressive behaviour. Professional judgement may be required, along with the advice of the Child Protection Support Service for Schools. Further detail may be found in DE Circular number 2022/02, 'Children Who Display Harmful Sexual Behaviour'.

## **Bullying, including cyberbullying**

These are also highly distressing and damaging forms of abuse which put young people at risk. They are the subjects of the School's Anti-Bullying and Anti-Cyberbullying policies respectively.

## **Self-harm and suicidal thoughts**

Self-harm is deemed to be any deliberate act by a person which causes actual physical harm to themselves. A young person may succumb to harming him/herself for a number of reasons, including poor mental health or a response to trauma or distress caused by environmental factors. Self-harm is not necessarily accompanied by suicidal thoughts, though may be a predictor that the young person is at increased risk of this. Suicidal thoughts can occur in the absence of actual self-harm.

## **Signs and symptoms of possible abuse or harm**

Because of their day-to-day contact with individual pupils, school staff - especially teachers, but also non-teaching staff, including supervisors and ancillary or auxiliary staff - are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. Such symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes, including:

- bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances
- drug, alcohol or solvent misuse.

Sometimes, however, they may be due to child abuse. For example, indicators of physical abuse may be:

- bruises, particularly bruises of a regular shape which may indicate the use of an implement such as a strap, or the mark of a hand;
- lacerations (also the most likely indicator of self-harm);
- bite marks;
- burns.

These may be apparent particularly when pupils change their clothes for Physical Education, swimming and other sports activities.

Possible indicators of neglect may be:

- inadequate clothing;
- poor growth;
- hunger;
- apparently deficient nutrition.

and of emotional abuse:

- excessive dependence;
- attention-seeking.

Sexual abuse may exhibit physical signs, or lead to a substantial behavioural change including:

- precocity;
- withdrawal;
- inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Signs of plans for forced marriage may include:

- request for extended leave of absence and failure to return from visits to country of origin.

No list of symptoms can be exhaustive. Also, it must be remembered that alternative medical, psychological or social explanations may exist for the signs and symptoms described above.

Signs such as those described above and others can do no more than give rise to concern - they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred, but teachers and other staff should be aware of the possible implications of, and be alert to, all such signs, particularly if they appear in combination or are regularly repeated.

#### **SECTION 4: THE ROLE OF STAFF AND GOVERNORS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING**

All staff who work in Belfast Royal Academy, both teaching and non-teaching staff, and any volunteers accepted to work in the school, need to know:

- how to identify the signs and symptoms of possible abuse or bullying
- how to identify the signs of a pupil being at risk of self-harm or suicide
- what the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures are, and, in particular, what the reporting procedures are
- how to talk to pupils about whom there are concerns in an appropriate way, and how to record the information they have acquired
- who the Designated Teacher is and who will carry out his/her responsibilities if he/she is unavailable or is the subject of the complaint.

All employees of the school will receive training in Safeguarding and Child Protection at least once every two years. All new staff will be provided with the Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and will have a training session as part of their induction programme. A number of members of staff will be given Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) or Safetalk training to assist them in dealing with pupils who may be considering suicide.

Volunteers or employees of other organisations, such as invigilators employed by an examination board or catering/cleaning staff employed by an outside agency, will be issued annually with a summary document outlining the main points from this document. Because of their unique position in having close contact with pupils throughout the year, catering staff will receive training by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection at least once every two years.

The Board of Governors have ultimate responsibility for the welfare of all pupils of the school and as such will ensure that all Governors receive relevant training from the Education Authority NI and/or awareness-raising from the Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection. They will consider annually the appropriateness of this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct for Staff.

Board of Governors must ensure that:

- A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- A Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher are appointed in their schools.
- They have a full understanding of the roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection.
- Safeguarding and child protection training is given to all staff and governors including refresher training.
- Relevant safeguarding information and guidance is disseminated to all staff and governors with the opportunity to discuss requirements and impact on roles and responsibilities.

- The school has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every two years.
- The school has an Anti-Bullying Policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying. See the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.
- The school ensures that other safeguarding policies are reviewed at least every 3 years or as specified in relevant guidance.
- There is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school.
- All school staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted, in line with DE Circular 2012/19 and DE Circular 2013/01.
- They receive a full annual report on all child protection matters (It is best practice that they receive a termly report of child protection activities). This report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the school, including training for staff.
- The school maintains the following child protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff and 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools: Safeguarding and child protection concerns; disclosures of abuse; allegations against staff and actions taken to investigate and deal with outcomes; staff induction and training.

#### Chair of Board of Governors

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

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

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

#### Designated Governor for Child Protection

The BoG delegates a specific member of the governing body to take the lead in safeguarding/child protection issues 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, vetting and induction of staff.

#### Designated Teacher for Child Protection

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

- The induction and training of all school staff including support staff.
- Being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff.

- Having responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns.
- Maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services e.g. Family Support Hubs.
- Making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where appropriate.
- Liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection.
- Keeping the school Principal informed.
- Taking the lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy.
- The promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school.
- Compiling written reports to the BoG regarding child protection.

#### Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection

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

Schools may have more than one DDT depending on their size, location, (e.g. split site schools) and the presence of an additional provision such as a nursery, learning support centre, speech and language unit, or boarding department. Schools to specify for their individual circumstances.

#### The School Principal

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

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

It is essential that there is protected time and support to allow the DTs to carry out this important role effectively and that DTs are selected based on knowledge and skills required to fulfil the role. The Principal must ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy, or summary, of the Child Protection Policy at intake and, at a minimum, every two years.

#### Other Members of School Staff

- Members of staff must refer concerns or disclosures initially to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or to the Deputy Designated Teacher if he/she is not available.
- Class teachers and Heads of Year should complete the Note of Concern ([Appendix 4](#)) if there are safeguarding concerns such as: 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.
- Staff should not give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, should not investigate nor should they ask leading questions.

### Support Staff

- If any member of the support staff has concerns about a child or staff member they should report these concerns to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher if he/she is not available. A detailed written record of the concerns will be made and any further necessary action will be taken.

### Parents

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

- Parents can play their part in safeguarding by informing the school.
- If the child has a medical condition or educational need.
- If there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child.
- If there is any change in a child's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility.
- If there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school.
- If their child is absent and should send in a note on the child's return to school. This assures the school that the parent/carer knows about the absence. More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: [www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection)

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

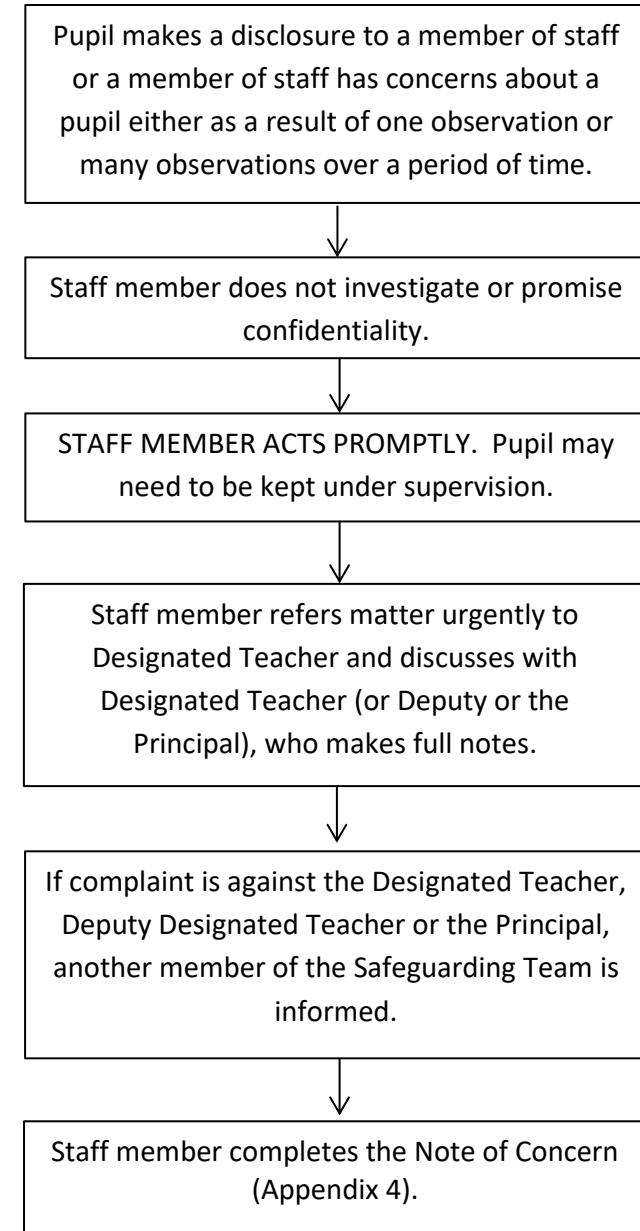
## **SECTION 5: PROCEDURES FOR ALL ADULTS REPORTING A SUSPICION OR DISCLOSURE THAT A PUPIL IS AT RISK OF HARM**

If, at any time, a pupil makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff that gives rise to concerns about possible abuse or other risk, or if a member of staff has concerns about the safety of a pupil, **the member of staff must act promptly**. He/she should not investigate - this is a matter for the Social Services – but should report these concerns **immediately** to the Designated Teacher (or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Designated Teacher or the Principal), explain the matter to him/her. The member of staff should not ask the pupil for a written record, but forward the **Note of Concern** (Appendix 4) to the Designated Teacher promptly. The pupil may be at immediate risk, he/she should not be left unattended. If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do if he/she has concerns about a pupil, or is unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse or harm, he/she should speak to the Designated Teacher. It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible abuse or other risk cannot be held in confidence since, in the interests of the pupil's safety, safeguarding staff may need to share this information with other professionals. The informant should be advised accordingly, but assured that only those who need to know will be told. The above procedures will apply unless the complaint is against the Designated Teacher, his/her Deputy or the Principal, in which case the Chairperson of the Board of Governors or another member of the Safeguarding Team should be informed.

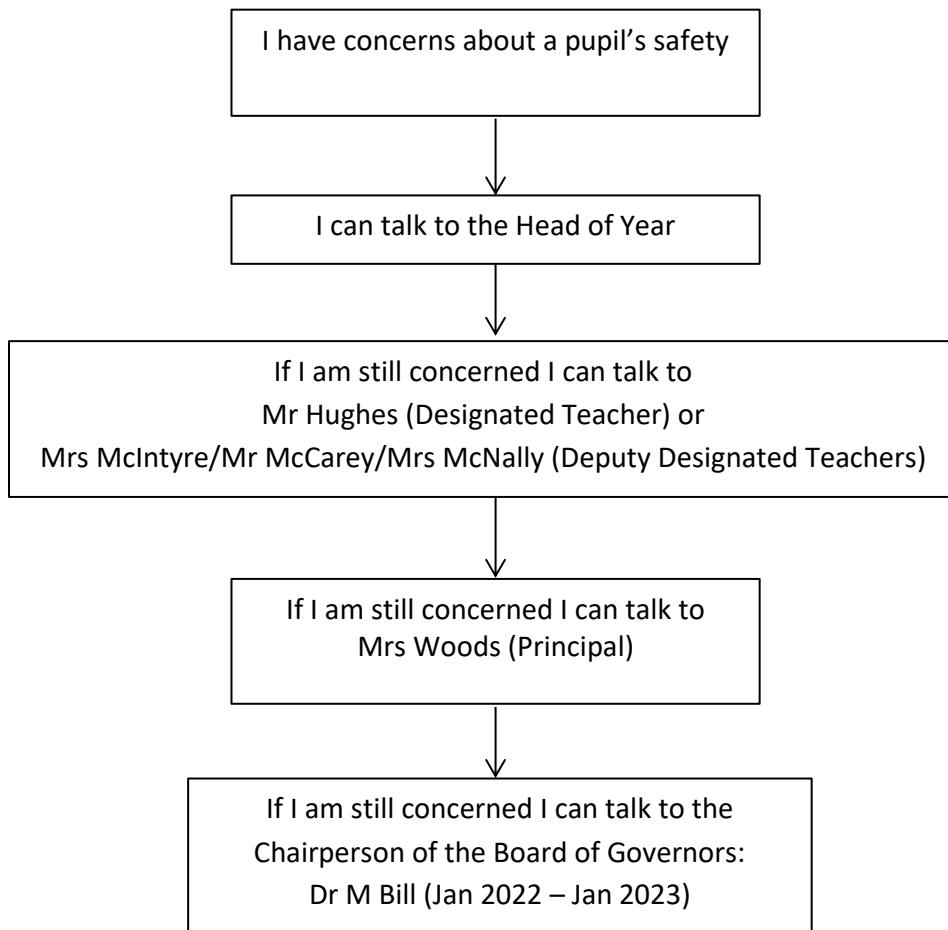
If a concern regarding significant harm is brought to any adult in the School Community, it is important that the adult takes the situation seriously and responds using the advice below:

<b>Do:</b> listen to the pupil sensitively and carefully. Praise the pupil for telling you.	<b>Do not:</b> ask leading questions which can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the pupil's mind
<b>Do:</b> give reassurance but tactfully explain you will have to tell someone else, but only those who need to know.	<b>Do not:</b> give a promise of confidentiality – it cannot be kept.
<b>Do:</b> say, for example, "Tell me what happened."	<b>Do not:</b> make suggestions, for example, "Did they do X to you?"
<b>Do:</b> if possible establish what happened, where it happened, when it happened and who did it.	<b>Do not:</b> interrogate or investigate and do not dwell too much on the alleged perpetrator.
<b>Do:</b> immediately afterwards complete the Note of Concern using the actual words used.	<b>Do not:</b> write as the pupil talks to you. Give your whole attention to the pupil.
<b>Do:</b> immediately afterwards talk to the Designated Teacher who will inform the Principal.	<b>Do not:</b> wait until your next non-teaching period, or the end of the day to notify the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher.

**Summary:**



## HOW A PARENT CAN RAISE A CONCERN



**Any person listed above may be contacted by telephoning  
the main School switchboard on 028 9074 0423.**

## **SECTION 6: THE RESPONSE OF THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

The Gillick Principle / Fraser Guidelines will be applied in every case. However, it is expected to be rare that this will result in a parent not being informed of concerns.

### **Abuse**

Following a report of suspected or disclosed abuse, the Designated Teacher will plan a course of action, including whether, in the best interests of the pupil, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. The Principal and/or the Chairperson of the Board of Governors may be consulted during this process. The Designated Teacher may also seek clarification or advice and consult with one of the Education Authority NI Designated Officers for Child Protection, or a Duty Social Worker, before a referral is made. If there are concerns that a pupil is at risk of abuse, the School has a duty to make a referral to Social Services. Social Services may refer the matter on to the PSNI but there may also be a duty on the school, in appropriate cases, to refer the matter directly to the PSNI.

The Principal will be informed of any course of action. The Designated Teacher will ensure that a written record is made, whether or not a referral is made.

Where a referral to Social Services or the PSNI takes place, Education Authority NI Designated Officer will be informed. Parents will be informed prior to the referral unless there are reasons why this may be deemed to put the pupil at risk. Referral to Social Services may be done initially by telephone, if urgent, and in any case by means of a written UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) form.

The above procedures will apply unless the complaint is against the Designated Teacher, his/her Deputy, the Principal, or the Chairperson, in which case the remaining members of the Safeguarding Team will be informed and will take the necessary action.

Any concerns regarding possible abuse by a member of staff should be directed in the first instance to the Designated Teacher, the Deputy Designated Teacher or the Principal. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed and the Board will decide on the appropriate course of action. This may result in no further action, disciplinary action, dismissal, referral to Social Services or, in appropriate circumstances, referral to the PSNI. A Record of Child Abuse Complaints will be maintained by the Principal and will be reported on annually to the Board of Governors.

### **Self-Harm**

If there are concerns that a pupil has self-harmed or may be at risk of self-harm, the parents will normally be informed and advised to make an urgent appointment for the pupil with a General Practitioner. If there are compelling reasons why the pupil should be allowed to attend a GP without informing a parent, evidence of attendance at the GP will be required by the Designated Teacher. If a referral is made by the GP to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), contact may be sought with them, with parental consent, in the interests of supporting the pupil appropriately. The Designated Teacher will ensure that a written record is kept of all concerns. Members of staff of the P.E. Department will normally be informed so that sensitivity can be exercised regarding changing into or out of P.E. kit.

### **Suicidal thoughts**

If there are concerns that a pupil may be at risk of suicide, the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher, or a member of staff with ASIST training, will attempt to negotiate with the pupil an agreed plan for the pupil's safety. The pupil's parent will be informed of the situation and the pupil will be placed in his/her care with the advice that the pupil should be taken urgently to a GP, or if the pupil is already being treated by CAMHS, the parent should consult them urgently. On return to School the pupil will be closely supported by the Head of Year, the Matron, the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection and/or any member of staff to whom the child relates. The Designated Teacher will ensure that the pupil is aware of the people to whom he/she can speak if in distress while in School. The Designated Teacher will also draw the pupil's attention to an emergency helpline such as ChildLine, or the Samaritans, whose numbers are available in the homework diary. The Designated Teacher will ensure that a written record is kept of events. If a referral is made by the GP to CAMHS, contact may be sought with them, with parental consent, in the interests of supporting the pupil appropriately.

Where a pupil is deemed to be at risk of harm, in addition to the procedures outlined above, the Head of Year and the School Matron will normally be informed.

If the pupil is not already receiving counselling and is not being treated by CAMHS, counselling will be offered, either through the School Counsellor or through an external agency.

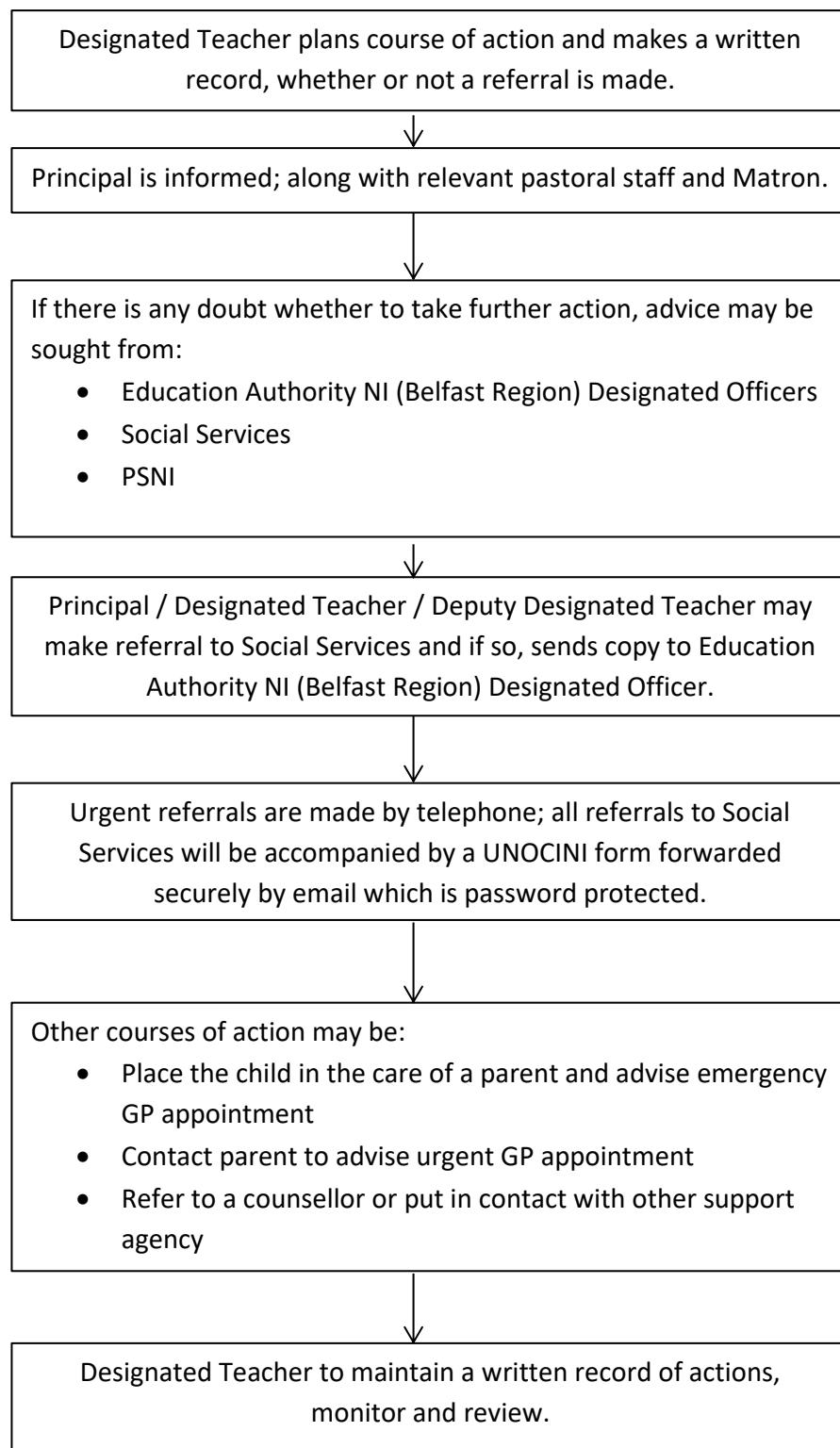
### **Sexting**

The advice of the police will be sought in all instances of sexting. Sexting situations involving pupils may include the following:

- A child who takes a sexually explicit image of him/herself has committed an offence. If that child then sends the image to another person, then the child has committed a further offence of distributing the image and the person who receives the image will also be liable for an offence of possessing the image. If a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil is involved in any such activity, the matter should be reported immediately to the Designated Teacher or his/her Deputy, who will contact the police for advice and guidance. The matter will be dealt with sensitively, taking account the age of the young person/people involved.
- Any text/chat which incites a child to engage in sexual activity or to make or distribute sexual images of themselves or another child will be reported to the police for further guidance. Every attempt will be made to ensure that relevant material is not deleted.

The appropriate responses in other sexting situations are outlined in 'Sexting and the Law', published by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

## SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES FOR RESPONSE BY THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM



If a member of staff suspects a pupil might be at risk, in the absence of the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teachers or any other member of staff from whom advice could be sought, staff may contact any of the organisations listed on Page 5 of this policy document.

## **Record-keeping**

The procedures outlined in Circular Number 2019/08, ‘Child Protection: Record-keeping in Schools’, updated June 2022, published by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland regarding the recording, storage, sharing, retention and disposal of child protection records will be adhered to by the school as outlined in the Child Protection Records Management Policy.

A summary of the procedures to be followed by staff is as follows:

Apart from informing the Designated Teacher, any information received from a pupil about a safeguarding or child protection matter should be held in strict confidence.

Detailed and factual records will be kept of all suspected or disclosed cases of child abuse (including exploitation), sexting, self-harm or suicidal thoughts. Paper records will be held by the Designated Teacher in a secure location: only the Designated Teacher, the Deputy Designated Teachers and the Principal will have access. Digital records will be kept for internal information-sharing purposes and will be stored in a Private Folder on the school system to which only the Principal and the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers have access. A discreet tag will be placed on the main pupil file to indicate that there are further notes kept on the pupil within the Child Protection records.

The Note of Concern (Appendix 4) is emailed to all staff and hard copies will be available in the General Office. The Note of Concern along with any additional notes, shall be given to the Designated Teacher who will hold them securely with all Safeguarding and Child Protection records as outlined above. Those submitting a report should keep a record of the date, time and to whom the record was passed. **They should not keep copies of any such report.**

## **SECTION 7**

### **SCHOOL TRIPS**

All members of staff taking pupils on a residential school trip will be required, as part of their risk assessment, to forward, at an early stage in making the arrangements, a provisional list of the pupils involved to the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection, specifically requesting that any significant risk to any pupil on the list should be made known to the staff with responsibility for the trip. If there is deemed to be a significant risk to a pupil who wishes to participate in the trip, consultation will take place between:

- the Principal
- the Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection
- the staff with responsibility for the trip
- at least one parent

regarding whether or not the pupil can be supported to participate in the trip and if so, under what circumstances. In taking this decision, the school will consider the welfare of:

- the pupil
- the other pupils on the trip
- the staff with responsibility for the trip.

The final decision regarding whether or not a pupil shall participate in the trip will rest with the Principal.

## **SECTION 8**

### **THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM**

The School curriculum provides for a range of means for promoting the health, wellbeing and safety of pupils. The School's Relationships and Sexuality Policy outlines the areas of the curriculum which address issues which may prevent harm. In particular, the Personal Development strand of Learning for Life and Work raises awareness of possible risk of harm in a wide range of areas and encourages pupils to make safe choices. Outside agencies may be engaged for the purpose of delivering information sessions.



## Appendix 1:

### Safeguarding Code of Conduct

#### Guidelines for Safeguarding Code of Conduct for Members of Staff

- The proper functioning (or success) of our School depends directly on the quality of the relationships between staff and pupils. Interest, concern, trust, mutual respect, understanding, tolerance, humour and generosity of judgement are all of central importance.
- In our dealings with young people, it is undesirable and unnecessary for us to be suspicious, unduly wary or fearful, but we should understand that innocent motives, words and actions can sometimes be misconstrued.
- In the context of our teaching, pastoral, examination, tutorial or other professional responsibilities we may be involved in one-to-one situations with pupils. These meetings should take place in school time, in the vicinity of and with the knowledge of other teachers and pupils. If the circumstances are to be outside the normal run, it is advisable to alert a senior colleague about the nature, purpose and locality of the meeting.
- We should exercise special care during residential activities and work undertaken before or after school, at weekends and in the holidays.
- Physical contact between a staff member and pupils should be avoided. However, where it is necessary, for example, in the public demonstration of a particular skill, it should be impersonal and beyond the risk of misinterpretation. Members of staff should make themselves familiar with the advice in regard to the use of Physical contact with pupils/Safe handling/Use of reasonable force (see below).
- If a young person becomes distressed in a one-to-one situation, verbal reassurance and comfort rather than physical comfort should be offered. An additional teacher of the same gender as the pupil can always be called to give assistance.
- Staff should not become deeply involved in a young person's problems outside school. Senior colleagues can, where appropriate, secure help from external agencies.
- Staff should not have social contact with a pupil for the purpose of establishing a friendship or strengthening a relationship. Where there are, coincidentally, social contacts between staff and pupils, for example where the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle, these contacts should be openly acknowledged and care should be exercised that they are not misconstrued.
- If a member of staff finds him/herself to any marked degree the subject of a young person's attentions, friendship or immature affections, a suitably distant approach should be taken and advice sought from the Pastoral Vice Principal or senior colleague.
- Staff should avoid communication with pupils using electronic/social media except for purposes related to their professional responsibilities and then, only in a manner which is transparent and open to scrutiny. Detailed guidance on this area will be included in the School's e-Safety policy.

- Except in circumstances of emergency, illness or extreme necessity it may be inadvisable for a member of staff to give a child a lift on his or her own.
- Staff need at all times to keep in mind that we have a duty of care and a legal responsibility. We should not believe it could never happen to us - or rely only on our good name to protect us. Members of staff should be clear that a relationship of a sexual nature with a pupil, up until the pupil officially leaves school, will be considered to be gross misconduct and a criminal offence and, in all probability, will lead to suspension followed by dismissal.

### **PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH PUPILS**

All staff have a responsibility to maintain confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. Integral to this is a clear understanding of standards of behaviour expected and in particular the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with pupils. School staff must accept that all physical contact can be open to scrutiny and that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued.

The Code of Conduct makes it clear that whilst, as a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children and young people, it is also unnecessary and unrealistic to suggest that physical contact should only happen in emergencies. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

As a general rule, when physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Appropriate physical contact in schools may occur most often with younger pupils, for example, physical comforting can give welcome reassurance to a distressed younger child.

### **SAFE HANDLING/USE OF REASONABLE FORCE**

The Department of Education is currently producing new guidance relating to safe handling and the use of reasonable force following a review on the use of restraint and seclusion in educational settings in Northern Ireland.

The recommendations of the report, which have been endorsed by the Minister for Education, include the principles on which the guidance should be based along with definitions which allow for a clear understanding of restrictive practices and supportive practices and when it is appropriate to use these. The underpinning principles of safe handling and the use of reasonable force are that these should be in line with the rights of the child under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and should never be used as a punitive measure, i.e. as a form of punishment. This is reiterated in the abolition of corporal punishment, making it illegal for education staff to use physical harm to punish a child under their care. In relation to seclusion, a child should never be placed involuntarily in any environment in which they are alone and/or physically prevented from leaving as a form of punishment, as this may constitute an act of 'Deprivation of Liberty' without the appropriate authority to do so. Supportive practices in meeting the health and wellbeing needs of pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs, should be agreed with the appropriate health care professionals and parents/carers of the pupil.

These guidelines are offered by the Department and the Education Authority NI under its control.

Prevention of situations where physical contact with a pupil has to be considered is at all times preferable to having to react to such situations. The difficulties of achieving this in practice are clearly recognised. An ethos within the school which encourages good behaviour and a sense of shared community is important. At an individual level, teachers should focus on class and pupil management techniques (including the use of the Solihull Approach) which minimise conflict and encourage pupils to take less aggressive approaches to situations.

### **If Physical Contact with a Pupil Cannot Be Avoided**

1. In a situation where other behaviour management strategies have failed to resolve the problem, or are inappropriate (e.g. in an emergency), there is a wide variety of circumstances in which physical contact with a pupil might be appropriate, or necessary, to restrain or control a pupil. They will fall into three broad categories:
  - a. where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury;
  - b. where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property;
  - c. where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.
2. Examples of situations that fall into one of the first two categories (a and b) are:
  - a pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil;
  - pupils are fighting;
  - a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects;
  - a pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he/she might have, or cause, an accident likely to injure him or herself or others;
  - a pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (**N.B. this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school**).
3. Examples of situations that fall into the third category (c) are:
  - a pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom;
  - a pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.
- 4.(a) Any physical contact with a pupil must not be more than that which is both reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances. These are the standards which would be applied by a court in deciding whether use of physical force in a particular case might have constituted assault and/or battery.
- 4.(b) However, some practical considerations also need to be taken into account:
  - Before intervening physically, a member of staff should seek to deploy other behaviour strategies. Where these have failed, the member of staff should, wherever practicable, tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop, and what will happen if he/she does not. The member of staff should continue attempting to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident, and should make it clear that physical contact will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary. A calm and measured approach to a situation is needed and staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper, or are acting out of anger or frustration, or that they wish to punish the pupil.
  - Sometimes a member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help (unless it is an emergency), for example, when dealing with an older pupil, or a physically large pupil, or more than one pupil, or if the teacher believes he/she may be at risk of injury. In those

circumstances the member of staff should remove other pupils who might be at risk, and summon assistance from a colleague or colleagues, or where necessary telephone the Police. The member of staff should inform the pupil(s) that he/she has sent for help. Until assistance arrives the member of staff should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

- Situations where a pupil refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom need to be handled carefully as they can be a prelude to a major confrontation, especially if physical contact with a pupil is used to eject older pupils. Where a pupil persistently refuses to leave a classroom and the teacher believes that the use of reasonable force will endanger the teacher or other pupils, assistance should be summoned quickly, for example by sending a trusted pupil for help.
- If a school is aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, it will be sensible to plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning needs to address:
  - managing the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary);
  - involving the parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take;
  - briefing staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance);
  - ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate.

5. Teachers have a duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure that pupils in their charge are not exposed to the risk of harm or suffer any undue injury. The discharge of this duty may necessitate the use of physical contact with a pupil but teachers should not attempt to restrain a child if they are likely, by doing so, to put themselves at greater risk of injury than would be justified by the duty of care to that child or others.

6.(i) What might be regarded as constituting reasonable force?

Physical intervention can take a number of forms. It might involve staff:

- physically interposing between pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- holding;
- pushing;
- pulling;
- leading a pupil by the arm;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; or (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

6.(ii) While it is difficult to define what a court might deem to be acceptable use of physical force, the following would probably be considered to be reasonable and appropriate:

- a) a holding tactic in which a pupil is restrained without injury to enable the pupil to calm down;
- b) the holding of a pupil's arms or legs to prevent or restrict punching or kicking;
- c) the use of just enough physical force, without causing injury, to remove a weapon or a dangerous object from a pupil's grasp; and
- d) physically preventing a pupil from exposing him/herself to possible danger by leaving the premises.

7. In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force', for example, to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something. **However, staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:**
  - holding a pupil round the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe;
  - slapping, punching, kicking or using any implement on a pupil;
  - throwing any object at a pupil;
  - twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
  - tripping up a pupil;
  - holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear;
  - holding a pupil face down on the ground.
8. Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent.
9. Before intervening physically, teachers should:
  - a) if at all possible, warn the child that physical restraint will be used if he/she does not desist; and
  - b) make every effort to ensure that another teacher is present to act as assistant and witness.
10. While intervening physically, teachers should:
  - a) use only the minimum force necessary to prevent injury or damage;
  - b) use physical force for the minimum period necessary to allow the child to regain self-control;
  - c) talk to the child constantly and reassuringly; and
  - d) keep their own temper under control.
11. When the immediate crisis has passed and the situation brought under control:
  - a) the circumstances and justification for the physical contact with a pupil should be recorded immediately, along with an account of what happened by the teacher and witness;
  - b) the incident should be discussed as soon as possible with the teacher's line manager who should offer support and guidance;
  - c) the pupil should be given the opportunity to discuss why physical contact was necessary;
  - d) parents and/or those with parental responsibility should be informed of the facts as soon as possible; and
  - e) the incident should be fully recorded by the school.

That report should include:

- the name(s) of the pupil(s) involved, and when and where the incident took place;
- the names of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident;
- the reason that force was necessary (e.g. to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or member of staff);
- briefly, how the incident began and progressed, including details of the pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long;
- the pupil's response, and the outcome of the incident;
- details of any obvious or apparent injury suffered by the pupil, or any other person and of any damage to property.

## **SECURITY IN SCHOOLS: OFFENSIVE WEAPONS ACT 1996**

Since 1 September 1996, under Section 4 of the Offensive Weapons Act, it is an arrestable offence to carry a knife or other offensive weapon on school premises, including playgrounds and playing fields. The Police have powers of entry and search in respect of such weapons on School premises.

## **Appendix 2:**

### **PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS**

The School will seek to work in partnership with parents to promote a safeguarding culture through maintaining strong channels of communication on safeguarding matters.

1. The School will help parents to understand its responsibility for the welfare of all the children and young people in its charge. Parents will be made aware, through the Handbook for Parents, the School website, parents' meetings or by postal or electronic mailing, of the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements and the fact that this may require pupils to be referred to the investigative agencies where appropriate.
2. If a case of suspected abuse is referred to the investigative agencies, the School will continue to inform parents of the educational progress of the pupil.
3. Parents also need to know how they can make a complaint, and the recourse that they have if they are not satisfied with the outcome. The School will inform parents annually in writing of its arrangements for parents to make known to staff any concerns they may have about the safety of their (or another) child: often, this will be by speaking directly to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, but other arrangements, such as informing the Principal, the Deputy Designated Teacher or the Head of Year may also be appropriate. The information will also make clear what will happen when any such concerns or complaints are reported, indicating:
  - which members of staff or other professionals will need to be informed;
  - who will report back to the parents on the progress and outcome of their complaint and (approximately) by when; and
  - what further avenues are open to them to pursue their complaint if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome and how they may do this. If the Principal has already been involved, this will normally involve referring their complaint onward to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

The diagram on Page 12 summarises how a parent may express a concern about a pupil.

### **Appendix 3:**

#### **PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES OF PUPILS**

- The Data Protection Act (DPA) and Human Rights Legislation require that the School take care in the use of photographs, videos and web cams in the School environment.
- All photographs held on file (both electronic and paper) of the pupils exist in accordance with the DPA.
- Photographs and videos of the pupils taken during the year to promote the School for publicity use in the prospectus or in other printed material will be subject to consent by the parents. Images being used will portray the pupils appropriately attired.
- Digital video recordings may be made at various functions or of class activities. These can help encourage creativity, motivate and enthuse pupils and improve communication and team-working skills and may be used for assessment purposes.
- Consent of staff members to use photographic images of them will be assumed unless explicitly withdrawn.
- Photographs taken for the purpose of journalism are exempt from the DPA and on all occasions the pupils will be aware that their photograph may be used.
- Photographs or film footage by parents or guardians of their children at School events is permitted under an exemption in the DPA.
- It is strictly forbidden for pupils to take photographic images in School unless for use for a school purpose and authorised by a member of staff. Breach of this rule of School discipline will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the School's Positive Behaviour Policy.
- The use of camera phones or the internet to send offensive pictures to other pupils is not permitted and will be dealt with under the School's Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy.
- The use of camera phones or the internet to send obscene or indecent pictures of or to a child is illegal and any pupil found to be engaging in such an activity will be referred to Social Services and/or the PSNI. Mobile phones may be confiscated by the School to retain evidence.
- Any incident of improper use of photographs should be reported to the Designated Teacher immediately.
- The misuse of School computer equipment is dealt with under the School's Acceptable Use Policy.

**Appendix 4:**

**Belfast Royal Academy**



**CONFIDENTIAL**

**NOTE OF CONCERN**

**CHILD PROTECTION RECORD - REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER**

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

Action taken at the time:

Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:

**(N.B. Good practice would be to obtain the full name of the person that you are speaking to and notify them that you are making a note of the advice given)**

Any further action taken:

Written report passed to Designated Teacher?

Yes:

No:

If 'No' state reason:

Date and time of report to the Designated Teacher:

Written note from staff member placed on pupil's Child Protection file? Yes:

No:

If 'No' state reason:

Name of staff member making the report: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Staff Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Designated Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_