



ST MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, NEWRY

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Revised September 2025

REFERENCE: DENI CIRCULAR 2017/04

SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING ETHOS

RATIONALE:

All staff in St Mary's have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. As a Rights Respecting School, we work together to engender in our students, positive attitudes and behaviours based on respect for self and others. This policy clarifies the responsibilities of teachers and other staff in the school in relation to child protection and to identify the action that should be taken to enable cases of suspected abuse to be properly considered and pursued.

PRINCIPLES:

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools" (DENI Circular 2017/04 – amended Sept. 2019; updated June 2020, updated Sept. 2024) and the SBNI Core Protection Policy and Procedures 2017 and Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (DHSSPSNI, 2017/2024).

- To ensure the child's right to protection from harmful treatment as defined in '**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**' – '*children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence; they must be kept safe from harm; and they must be given proper care by those looking after them* (Article 19). Moreover, Article 3 provided that '*when adults or organisations make decisions which affect children, they must always think first about what would be best for the child.*'
- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first.
- To ensure that the child's welfare is the paramount consideration – '**Children (NI) Order 1995**'. The Children Order defines a 'child' as a person under the age of 18.
- To have in place a structure within the school which will provide a swift effective response to any incident of suspected or actual abuse.
- To provide staff with a procedure for action in any case of suspected or actual child abuse.

The School Safeguarding Team members are:

- Miss D Crawley (Principal)
- Mr M Fitzpatrick (Designated Teacher and Vice Principal)
- Mrs J Hughes (Deputy Designated Teacher)
- Mrs P Maguire (Designated Governor for Child Protection)
- Mrs P Cunningham MBE (Chair of the Board of Governors)

Definitions of Safeguarding and Child Protection:

Safeguarding is more than Child Protection. Safeguarding begins with **promotion and preventative** activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to Child Protection.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)
Child Protection is a *part* of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher must:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role
- Organise training for all staff (whole school training) and induction training for new staff/volunteers
- Lead in the development of the school's Child Protection Policy
- Act as a point of contact for staff and parents
- Be introduced to all visiting students from partner schools in ALC
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents
- Maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services eg Family Support Hubs.
- The promotion of a Safeguarding and Child Protection Ethos in the school
- Make referrals to the Social Services Gateway Team and PSNI where appropriate
- Liaise with the EA's Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- Ensure staff are aware that Notes of Concern should be completed using the template
- Keep the School Principal informed
- Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection

The Principal

The Principal must ensure that:

- DENI 2017/04 is implemented within the school
- A Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher are appointed
- All staff receive child protection training including induction training provided for new staff/volunteers
- All necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- The Chairman of the Board of Governors, Designated Governor (and, when appropriate, the Board of Governors) is kept 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
- Child Protection is a standing item on the agenda of all Board of Governors meetings and termly updates and the annual report are provided
- The school's child protection policy is reviewed annually and that parents and students receive a copy of this policy at least once every 2 years.
- Confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.
- Allegations/complaints against school staff are managed correctly
- The school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints are correctly maintained.

The Designated Governor for Child Protection

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

- The role of the Designated Teachers
- The content of Child Protection Policy
- 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

The Chair of the Board of Governors

The Chair of the Board of Governors must:

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment
- Ensure that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy
- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment & selection training provided by the EA Child Protection Support Service for Schools, the EA Governor Support and Human Resource departments.
- Ensure that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive termly updates and a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity

Other Members of School Staff

All staff in school must be aware of the possibility of physical, behavioural and emotional indicators or hear allegations of abuse.

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

The member of staff must:

- Refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teacher for Child Protection;
- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief and support the child
- Act promptly
- Make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child on a Note of Concern (**Appendix 1**)
- Avail of whole school training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children
- **Not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures
- **Not** investigate
- **Not** ask leading questions

In addition, the Class Teacher should:

- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about student abuse or serious bullying, concerns about home conditions including disclosures of domestic violence

Non-Teaching Staff

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

Parents/Carers

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

Parents/carers can play their part in safeguarding by informing the school:

- If their daughter has a medical condition or educational need.
- If there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent/carer or child.
- If there is any change in their daughter's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility.
- If their daughter will be absent from school by telephoning the school office on the morning of their child's absence and sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's situation.

Parents/carers are also asked to:

- Collect their daughter from school if she is leaving school earlier than 3pm (Appointment, sent home sick).
- Familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying, Behaviour, Internet and Child Protection Policies.
- Follow the school procedures in relation to contacting members of staff.

**It is essential that the school has up to date contact details for
parents/carers**

The Board of Governors

Board of Governors must ensure that:

- A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed together with a Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher and they have a full understanding of their roles.
- The school has a Child Protection Policy and Complaints Procedure which are reviewed annually and available to parents/carers and students.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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, DE Circular 2013/01, and DE Circular 2024/01.
- They receive a full report on all child protection matters at each Board of Governors Meeting.
- The school maintains child protection records in line with relevant DE Circulars.

PROCEDURES:

St Mary's recognise the five main responsibilities in the area of Child Protection: Prevention; Recognition; Response; Referral and Confidentiality/Record Keeping.

PREVENTION:

St Mary's High School is committed to the protection of all its students. We acknowledge the importance of our pastoral role in the welfare of all young people and through our mission statement and ethos every student is treated as an individual and every effort is made to ensure that each student achieves their full potential. Through our Pastoral Programme and Counselling Service we offer a supportive environment to students who are victims of abuse.

The Personal Development Programme ensures students are aware of personal safety, the importance of enhancing self esteem and encouraging social skills. The RSE programme in St Mary's provides opportunities for our students to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships, growth and development and sexuality through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework. We aim to encourage the students to make responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they lead their lives.

The Board of Governors ensures that the school follows a Code of Conduct for all staff (**Appendix 5**) towards all its students. There is a permanent child protection notice board on the main corridor and the photos of the Safeguarding Team are displayed in every classroom.

We ensure that members of the public who are invited to be involved in educational activities in school, as helpers/leaders on educational visits or residential visits are subject to vetting procedures in keeping with current arrangements for the care and protection of children and all young people.

All Years 13/14 students who are involved in educational programmes in local Primary Schools or in Health Care settings are vetted through the Access NI process in accordance with relevant legislation and Department Guidance.

All external staff involved in any Programmes in school are fully vetted through the Access NI process in accordance with relevant legislation and Department Guidance.

We will ensure that we will provide effective management of all our staff through our regular training programmes and efficient supervision procedures.

Safeguarding Initiatives in St Mary's:

- St Mary's is a Rights Respecting and Welcoming School where all students feel valued, safe, respected and supported;
- Staff lead by example in promoting respect for each other and forming positive relationships with students acting as moral compasses for all students;
- Through our Pastoral Programme, Mentoring Programme and Counselling Service we offer a supportive environment to all students. The Personal Development Programme allows students to explore key issues within their personal development including Self Concepts, Self Esteem, Health and Well-being, Relationships and Personal Safety;
- Faith development is an integral part of all RE Programmes of Study and the School Chaplain is available for advice and counselling;
- The school uses a range of external agencies for support and guidance including Education and Welfare Office - Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychologists, Behaviour Support Team, CAMHS, SAM, Kinnego Outreach Centre, EOTAS, School Counsellor, PIPS, Start 360, CARA Friend, Love for Life, Super You, Ready for Anything, Bolster Community and PSNI;
- The Child Protection Policy is reviewed on annual basis and shared with Governors, Staff, Parents and Students;
- The Vice Principal The Safeguarding Team maintains records of Child Protection Record of Concerns; Disclosures of Abuse; Actions Carried Out; Referral to Social Services (UNOCINI Forms);
- The Principal records any complaints against staff in a hard backed book and is stored in a locked cupboard;
- The Vice Principal or a key member of staff attends Case Conferences, LAC Reviews and Family Support Meetings;

- The Staff Code of Conduct is shared with all adults working in school;
- All staff, teaching and non teaching and volunteers receive Child Protection Training;
- Child Protection issues are on agenda at every Board of Governors Meeting;
- A Safeguarding Team Poster and photos are displayed in every classroom;
- The Safeguarding Team photos are displayed on a notice board in school;
- Students are regularly reminded of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers through Assemblies, Student Diary and PD lessons;
- The main doors are locked during the school day and all visitors must press buzzer, report to Reception Desk, sign in and out of the school and wear a **Visitor Badge** while on the premises;
- If a student leaves school during the school day, a parent or guardian must report to the Receptionist and sign their daughter out of school – no student is permitted to leave school unless a parent/guardian collects her or they make alternative arrangements agreed by the school;
- Lunchtime supervision is provided by non-teaching members of staff who have received full Child Protection training;
- All new staff and volunteers are fully vetted prior to commencement of employment in school
- **Collaboration Students**: If a student from a visiting school makes a disclosure to any member of staff in St Mary's, the staff member will immediately inform the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher. The Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher in St Mary's will then **immediately** contact the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher in the student's school.
- Collaboration Students are introduced to the Designated Teacher during their Induction programme and the Safeguarding Team photos are displayed in all collaboration classrooms.

RECOGNITION:

Definitions of Abuse:

Definition of 'Child Abuse':

'Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them' The definition of signs and symptoms of abuse are taken from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI (October 2024).

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.

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.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

The abuse may take a number of forms, including:

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

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.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

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.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunity to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

Domestic Violence It is now recognised that children who live in an atmosphere of domestic violence may be at risk. Domestic violence is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

Symptoms which young people may display and which are indicators only include:

- Nervousness
- Low self-worth
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Nightmares / flashbacks
- Physiological – stress / nerves
- Stomach pain
- Bed wetting
- Immature / needy behaviour
- Temper tantrums
- Aggression
- Internalising distress or withdrawal
- Truancy
- Alcohol and drugs
- Bullying

These symptoms can lead to a child/ young person being misdiagnosed as having an illness, learning difficulties, or being naughty or disruptive.

If it comes to the attention of school staff that domestic abuse is or may be a factor for a child/young person this must be passed to the Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information to Social Services

Sexual 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 (see section 7).

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend or girlfriend. But they will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they don't want to do. The abuser may physically or verbally threaten the young person, or be violent towards them. They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family. Indicators of concern are as follows:

- Associating with other young people involved in exploitation;
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- Suffering from sexually transmitted infections;
- Mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing;
- Drug and alcohol misuse;
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour.
- Going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late;
- Regularly missing school or not taking part in education;
- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions (often new mobile phones);

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

FGM is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland. Where any individual or organisation has a concern that a child or young person may be at immediate risk of FGM they should report this to the PSNI without delay. Where any individual or organisation has a concern that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, they should make a referral to the relevant HSCT Gateway Team, to enable a response to be made that is compliant with, in the first instance, a family supportive approach, or if there is judged to be a significant risk to the child of FGM, a response compliant with Child Protection Policy and Procedures and includes the involvement of the PSNI. Consideration should always be given to the needs of any female child of the family or female child resident in the same household.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland, and where an agency, organisation or practitioner has knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person, they should contact the PSNI immediately.

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS 2016 (revised Aug 2017)

Operation Encompass

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

When the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our students is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day, to share this information with a member of the safeguarding team. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide direct or indirect support to this child and their family.

This information will be treated like any other child protection information as per DE Circular 2020/07. It will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the Safeguarding Team have completed online Operation Encompass training and members of staff responsible for receiving telephone calls are aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency.

Children with Increased Vulnerabilities

Certain groups of children are at increased risk of becoming victims of abuse, they include: Children with a disability, Children with limited fluency in English, Looked After Children, Children who go missing, Children of parents with additional needs and Children with identity issues.

Adult Safeguarding

An 'Adult at risk of harm' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics and/or life circumstances. The school will follow the procedures outlined in this policy when responding to concerns or disclosures of abuse relating to our students who are 18 years or over.

Education Other Than At School

If a student attends an EOTAS provision, a member of the safeguarding team (Mrs J Hughes) will share any child protection concerns they have with the Designated Teacher in the centre. If child protection concerns arise when a student is attending an EOTAS provision the Designated Teacher in EOTAS will follow child protection procedures and will advise a member of the school's safeguarding team of the concerns and any action taken. It is the responsibility of EOTAS staff to maintain their records in accordance with DE Circular 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools and any subsequent updates.

RESPONSE:

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time. As well as the more obvious physical or sexual abuse, members of staff should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse, such as persistent sarcasm, verbal bullying, or severe and persistent negative comment or actions. Members of staff will be encouraged to reflect on every aspect of their contact with children who may give rise to perceptions or allegations of this form of abuse.

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in St Mary's. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring and will take immediate steps to prevent it from continuing. The student who is being bullied will be protected and supported. The student displaying bullying behaviours will be disciplined in accordance with our Behaviour Policy but also supported. Parents of both the student who is being bullied and the student displaying bullying behaviours will be contacted immediately the bullying behaviour has been identified. The school will adhere to the procedures and guidelines in the Anti-Bullying Policy.

When we become aware of young people below the age of consent engaging in sexual activity or, where we have concerns about a 16/17-year-old in a sexual relationship the Designated Teacher has a duty to share this information with Social Services.

When a member of staff receives information about an allegation of child abuse, he or she must:

- Listen carefully to the student, accept the information and make no judgement **(Receive)**
- Reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting it **(Reassure)**
- Explain to the student what you are going to do and whom you have to pass the information on to. Ensure the student is ok and in safe place. **(Respond)**
- Report the information to the Designated Teacher as soon as possible **(Report)**
- Record all the vital facts – When, where, who and what **(Record)**

REFERRAL:

The School Safeguarding Team members are:

- Miss D Crawley (Principal)
- Mr M Fitzpatrick (Designated Teacher and Vice Principal)
- Mrs J Hughes (Deputy Designated Teacher)
- Mrs P Cunningham MBE (Chair of the Board of Governors)
- Mrs P Maguire (Designated Governor for Child Protection)

The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher:

The Vice Principal, Mr M Fitzpatrick, is the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and in his absence Mrs J Hughes (Deputy Designated Teacher) will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

In all cases of Child Protection concerns, clarification, in keeping with guidance and policy, will be sought and dealt with sensitively and carefully bearing in mind that it is not the responsibility of education staff to undertake investigations.

Anyone who suspects that a student may be a victim of abuse or in need of protection must refer the matter **directly** to the Designated Teacher, Mr M Fitzpatrick. Mr Fitzpatrick will discuss the matter with the Principal, Miss Crawley, who has overall responsibility for dealing with the matter.

Where a member of staff becomes aware of concerns or is approached by a child they should not investigate – this is a matter for Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher and full notes should be made. These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The Designated Teacher will decide or consult with the EA's CPSS team whether in the best interest of the child the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, **the parent will be informed immediately.**

The Designated Teacher may consult with the EA's Designated Officer for Child Protection or Social Services Gateway Team before a referral is made. During consultation with the Designated Officer the child's details will be shared. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice.

The safety and well-being of the student is our main priority.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the Designated Teacher will telephone Social Services Gateway Team. Where an arrestable offence is suspected, the referral will be made to the PSNI. Mr Fitzpatrick will also notify the EA Southern Designated Officer for Child Protection. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be completed and forwarded to the Gateway Team.

In the event of a safeguarding concern and the PSNI are involved, the school is obliged to cooperate with the PSNI. If the PSNI wish to speak to a student in school or at home parental permission will be sought in advance.

Staff Training: St Mary's is committed to Staff Development training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on the Child Protection Policy and procedures with some members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, are given full Child Protection training every two years and are made aware of possible signs of abuse and of others reasons for the symptoms e.g. bereavement, family

disruption, drug or alcohol or solvent abuse. The Principal/Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses provided by the Child Protection Support Service for Schools.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they receive Child Protection Training, including a copy of the CP Policy and Code of Conduct for Staff.

All members of staff realise **no promise of confidentiality can be given to a child who makes an allegation of abuse.**

Allegation against a member of staff:

Where an allegation is made against a member of the school's teaching or non-teaching staff, the incident will be reported to the Principal or in her absence the Designated Teacher immediately and the normal Child Protection procedures will apply unless the complaint is made against the Designated Teacher or Principal - this procedure is outlined in **Appendix 2.**

Allegation against the Principal:

Where an allegation is made against the Principal, the Designated Teacher will inform the Chair of the Board of Governors immediately and they will ensure all necessary actions will be taken - this procedure is outlined in **Appendix 2.**

Allegation against the Designated Teacher:

Where an allegation is made against the Designated Teacher the complaint must be referred to the Principal immediately who will ensure all necessary actions are taken - this procedure is outlined in **Appendix 2.**

Suspension from duties:

Where an allegation has been referred to Social Services about a member of staff, including the Principal or Designated Teacher, the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with students and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

Child protection procedures as outlined in Appendix 2 will be followed in keeping with current Department of Education guidance.

Allegation against someone other than a member of staff (Eg. External speaker or visitor):

Where an allegation is made against an external speaker or visitor the incident will be reported to the Designated Teacher immediately and the normal Child Protection Procedures will apply. If the Principal has concerns that a child may be at immediate risk from a volunteer, the services of the volunteer will be terminated immediately. This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in **Appendix 3.**

Allegation against a student from another school:

Where an allegation is made against a student from another school the incident will be reported immediately to the Designated Teacher and the normal Child Protection Procedures will apply. This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in **Appendix 3.**

How a Parent can make a Complaint:

At St Mary's we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern they can talk to the class teacher or the Principal/Designated teacher for child protection. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local

Gateway team or to the PSNI Public Protection Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in **Appendix 4**.

Consent

Prior to making a referral to Social Services the consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of harm or it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation following advice from statutory authorities. In circumstances where the consent of the parent/carer and/or the young person has been sought and is withheld the school where possible will respect their wishes however our primary consideration must be the safety and welfare of the child and will make referral in cases where consent is withheld if the school believes on the basis of the information available that it is in the best interests of the child or adult involved.

CONFIDENTIALITY/RECORD KEEPING:

Confidentiality:

All members of staff realise **no promise of confidentiality can be given to a child who makes an allegation of abuse**. In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. Where abuse is suspected schools have a legal duty to refer to the Statutory Agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

Record Keeping: - DENI Circular 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person and are only accessible by the Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teachers and Principal.

All third party Child Protection records on a child will be destroyed when the student leaves St Mary's or if a child has been taken off the Child Protection Register. All internal Child Protection records on a child will be retained.

Should a child transfer to another school whilst there are current child protection concerns we will share these concerns with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school.

Immediately an allegation is made against a member of staff the Principal will initiate as necessary the following action:

- Obtain details of the allegation in writing (Note of Concern), signed and dated by the person who received the allegation and from the child who is the subject of the allegation and countersigned and dated by the Principal.
- Record any information about times, dates, locations and names of potential witnesses.
- Documents relating to an allegation or an investigation will be retained, together with a written record of the outcome of the investigation in a locked cupboard. Where disciplinary action has been taken, documents will be retained on the teacher's personal and confidential file in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedures.
- If the teacher is dismissed, or resigns before a process is completed, the Principal will inform the employing authority so that they may implement their statutory duty to report the case to the Department of Education Teachers Misconduct Section.
- Where a student has made an allegation, a copy of the statement or the record made of it will be kept on a section of the student's personal file which is not open to disclosure, together with a written record of the outcome of the investigation in a locked cupboard. The information will be retained and never destroyed as there is no limitation of criminal cases.

Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Group Meetings

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher or Principal may be invited to attend an initial and review Child Protection Case Conferences and/or Core Group meetings convened by the Health and Social Care Trust. They will provide a written report which will be compiled following consultation with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored and supported in accordance with the Child Protection Plan.

Child Protection will be an item on the agenda of every Board of Governors meeting.

The Designated Teacher will present an annual report to Governors during Term 3.

Information about individual students and/or their families will not be shared with the Governors.

Code of Conduct: All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the child and young people in their charge must be above reproach.

All staff are aware of and adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct (**Appendix 5**). If any member of staff is concerned at the treatment of any student by another member of staff, s/he will inform the Designated Teacher who will take appropriate action.

The school's **Code of Conduct** is available on request.

Where a Child Protection allegation has been made, regard will be given:

-  *First and foremost to the welfare of the student concerned and that of other students in the school;*
-  *To the efficient functioning of the school;*

Related Whole School Policies:

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions.

This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Attendance Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- E Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- CRED Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Preventative Curriculum Policy
- RSE Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Learning Support Policy
- Students with SEBW
- GDPR Documentation
- Educational Visits Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Key Pastoral Policies are available to Parents/Carers on the School Website

(www.stmarysnewry.com) and School App.

Dissemination of the Child Protection Policy:

Pastoral Policies (including the Child Protection Policy) are available on the school's website www.stmarysnewry.com and school app. An overview of key Pastoral Policies is sent to all parents at the start of each academic year.

An overview of the Child Protection Policy is in the school diary which is given to every student at the beginning of the academic year. Photographs of the Safeguarding Team are displayed on the Safeguarding Noticeboard and in every classroom.

Consultation:

The policy was reviewed in consultation with the Child Protection and Support Service (June 2025)

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:

Mr Fitzpatrick, the Designated Teacher, is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Child Protection Policy. Mr Fitzpatrick will update the Policy and Procedures in light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually. This will be done in consultation with EA - Child Protection and Support Service, the Safeguarding Team and Governors. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the child protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Teacher.

The Designated Teacher is responsible for promoting a Child Protection/Safeguarding ethos within school, the training of **all staff** in Child Protection Procedures and the review the implementation of the policy and advise the Principal and SLT on a regular basis.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy

Signed by Chair of Governors: _____

Date: _____

Signed by Principal: _____

Date: _____

Date of Review: __September 2026_____

Appendix 1

NOTE OF CONCERN – St Mary's High School, Newry

CHILD PROTECTION RECORD - REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER

Name of Student:
Form Class:
Date and Time of Incident / Disclosure:
Circumstances of Incident / Disclosure (Where did it take place?):
Nature and description of concern:
Who else was involved, including any witnesses to the event and what was said or done and by whom:
Action taken at the time by Member of Staff:
Date and Time the Report was given to the Designated Teacher:
Designated Teacher Section

Any further action taken by Designated Teacher:

Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:

Report from Staff Member placed on student's Child Protection File

☐

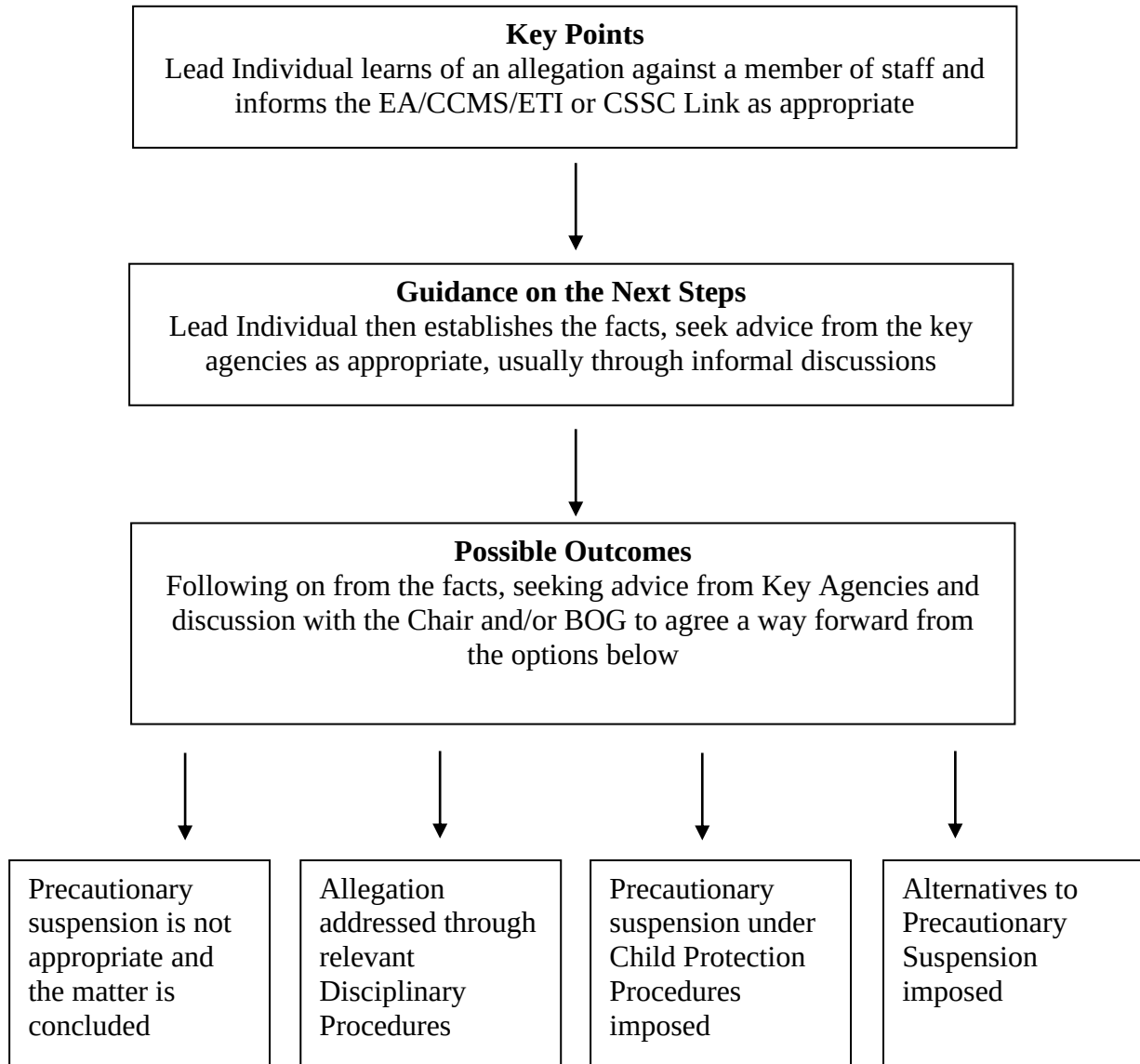
Name of Staff Member Submitting the Report: _____

Signature of Staff Member: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of Designated Teacher: _____ **Date:** _____

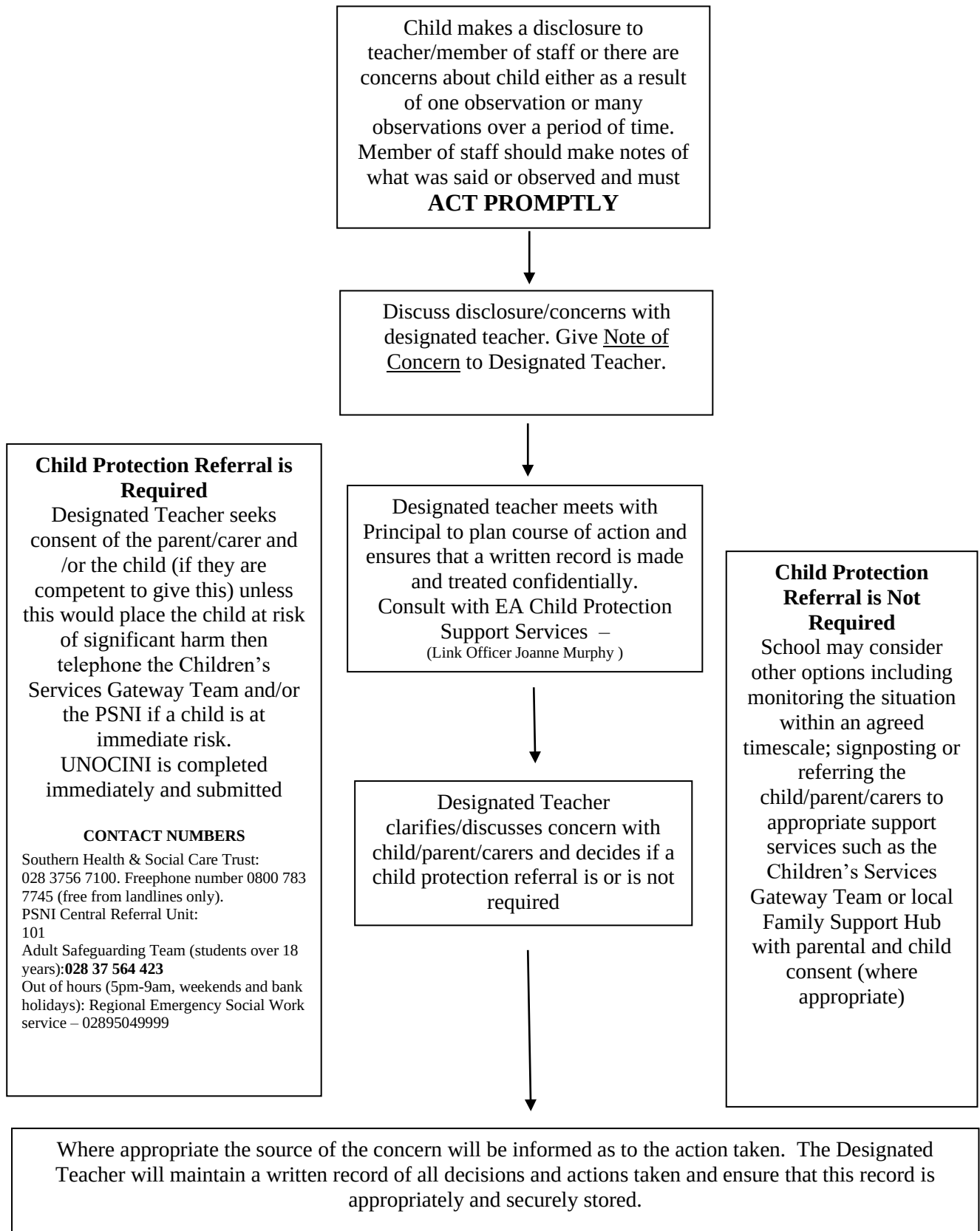
Appendix 2

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

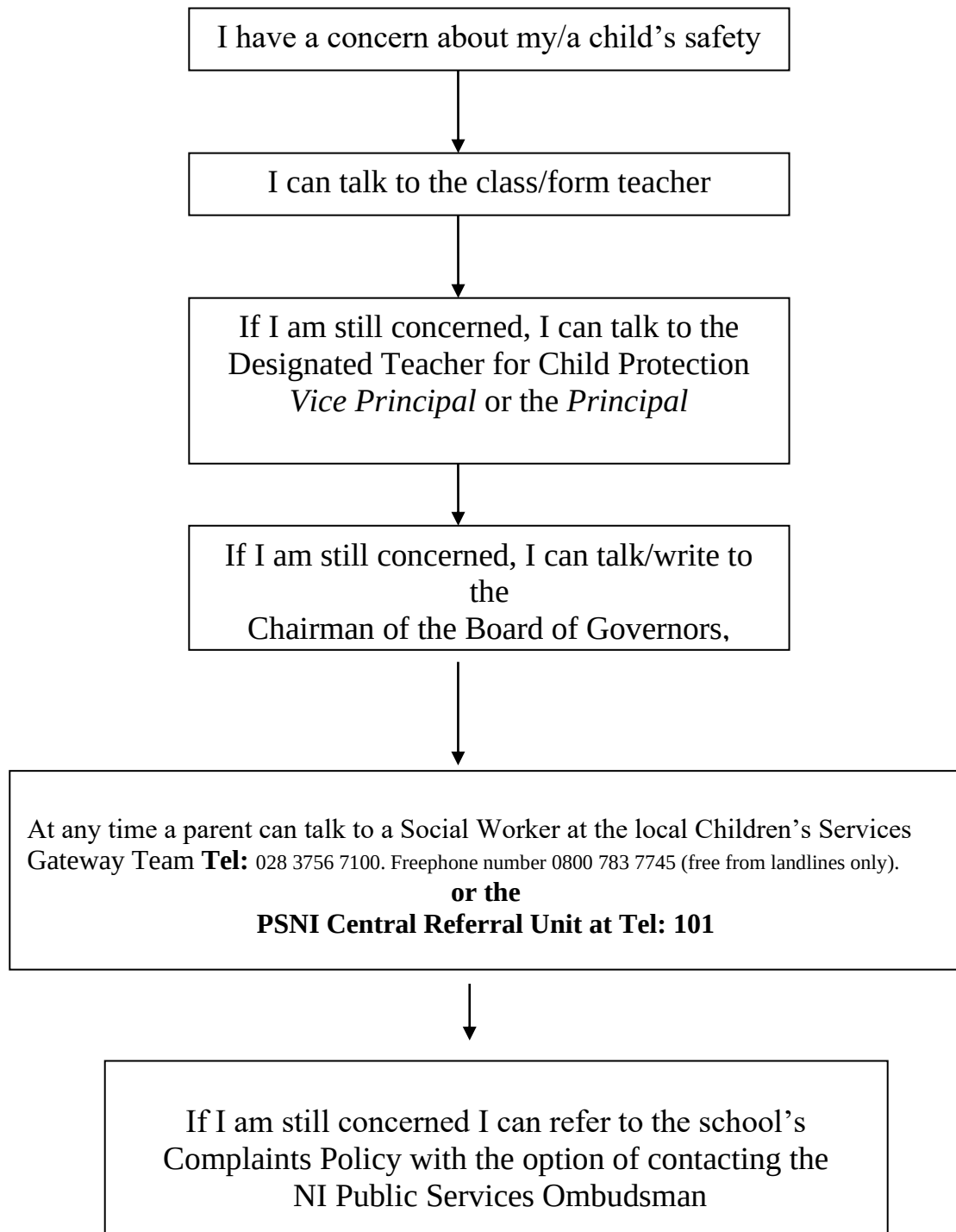


Appendix 3

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



**If a Parent has a potential Child Protection Concern
within the school**



Appendix 5

Code of Conduct for Staff in St Mary's Regarding Contact with Students

Introduction

All actions concerning students and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the students and young people in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences students and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within St Mary's. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of Student Protection, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on student conduct.

Objective and Principles

This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all school staff and volunteers are expected to observe. School staff and volunteers are role models and are in a unique position of influence and trust and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all the students within the school. As a member of a school community, each person has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, whether inside or outside working hours.

This Code of Conduct applies to all staff and volunteers of the school.

This Code of Conduct does not form part of any employees' contract of employment.

Code of Conduct

Setting an Example

- All staff and volunteers who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by students. Staff must therefore, for example, never use language which could reasonably be construed as being inappropriate or offensive where there is a realistic risk that it could be overheard by students, parents or other staff.
- All staff and volunteers must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our students to do the same.
- All staff and volunteers must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.
- This Code helps all staff and volunteers to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable and regard should also be given to the disciplinary rules set out by the employing authority.
- All staff and volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves and comply with all school policies and procedures.

Safeguarding Students

- All staff and volunteers have a duty to safeguard students from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- The duty to safeguard students includes the duty to report concerns about a student or colleague to a member of the school's Safeguarding Team (Designated Teacher (DT), Deputy Designated Teacher (DDT) for Student Protection or the Principal).
- The school's DT is Mr M Fitzpatrick and the DDT Mrs J Hughes
- All staff and volunteers are provided with personal copies of the school's Student Protection Policy and must be familiar with these documents and other relevant school policies, eg E-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy.
- All staff and volunteers should treat students with respect and dignity. They must not demean or undermine students, their parents, carers or colleagues.
- All staff and volunteers should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as sarcasm, making jokes at the expense of students, embarrassing or humiliating students, discriminating against or favouring students.

- All staff and volunteers must take reasonable care of students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare. Staff should also complete risk assessments where appropriate, in accordance with school policies.

Relationships with Students

- Within the Pastoral Care Policies of St Mary's, staff should ensure that their relationships with students are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the students, taking care that their conduct minimises the potential for negative comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent girls and boys.
- Relationships with students must be professional at all times, sexual relationships with students are not permitted and may lead to an abuse of trust and criminal conviction.

Student Development

- All staff and volunteers must comply with school policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of students.
- All staff and volunteers must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of students.

Honesty and Integrity

- All staff and volunteers must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.

Private Meetings with Students

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private meetings with individual students. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential meetings must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such meetings, preferably with another member of staff present, 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 meeting is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- Where possible another student or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the meeting and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

Out of School and After-School Activities

- Staff should take particular care when supervising students in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity. It is important to emphasise that the standards of professional conduct and behaviour expected of staff should be no different to that which applies within school. Staff should be aware of the particular care which should be taken with older, more mature students in these circumstances.

Physical Contact with Students

- As a general principle, staff are advised **not** to make unnecessary physical contact with any student.
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch students only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed student, especially a younger student, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- Staff should never touch a student who has clearly indicated that she is, or would be uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the student, others or property from harm. (*Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling Policy*)

- 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 student should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other students 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 student, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been or maybe misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal.

Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- Staff 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 students or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. In St Mary's we value feedback from students, parents and Governors when proposing to use materials in connection with the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme. (***Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy***)
- If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

Personal Correspondence

- It is advisable for staff **NOT** to write personal notes, letters, mobile phone texts or to send personal emails to individual students. This advice is not intended to curtail the use of email where St Mary's has agreed the use of this medium for submission of work, advice over aspects of subjects being covered or other professional matters and have ensured that parents and carers are aware of the school's policy. However, all staff and other adults using email in this context need to be aware of the less formal style that can characterise this form of communication and should ensure that responses do not convey an inappropriate tone. It is expected that all correspondence should remain professional.
- All e-mail correspondence between staff and students should be via staff C2K email account

Verbal Interaction

- All verbal exchange in school shall be conducted in a calm and professional manner reflecting the aims of St Mary's as a Rights Respecting School. Only in unusual circumstances, for example in emergency situations or when attracting attention in large areas, will voices be raised. **Sarcastic, threatening or demeaning verbal interaction is not acceptable. Verbally humiliating or frightening students as a means of punishment is not acceptable.** The use of humour can be helpful in diffusing situations but the humour used must be understood and appropriate.

Conduct Outside of Work

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

E-Safety and Internet Use

- Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the school's E-Safety and ICT Acceptability Use Policy at all times both inside and outside of work.
- Staff should keep passwords secure and ensure that no other person can gain access to their email account and maliciously send messages which appear to have been written by them. Both staff and students should use an email address provided as part of the official C2K internal service. Since these services can be monitored, they provide a measure of protection for both parties. If staff or students receive inappropriate email or text messages from any source they should inform the Principal or Designated Teacher immediately.
- Staff should refrain from using their personal/home phones to contact students. The increased availability of **Social Networking Sites** or similar on-line forums also poses risks for staff and students. While they are popular among young people and offer many positive experiences, there is widespread concern about their potential abuse by paedophiles attempting to groom new victims. Staff **should not use** Social Networking Sites to communicate with students and should be aware that it is impossible to determine the age of any participant in these environments.
- Staff and volunteers must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute. Staff and volunteers should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.
- Staff should exercise caution in their use of all social media or any other web based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts established by others.
- Contact with students must be via school authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal telephone number, email addresses or communication routes via personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with students. If contacted by a student by an inappropriate route, staff should report the contact to the Principal immediately.
- **Photographs/stills or video footage of students should only be taken using school equipment for purposed authorised by the school.** Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental consent has been given. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be retained and destroyed in accordance with school's Record Management Policy and Disposal Schedules.

Confidentiality

- Members of staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about students in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal information about a student or her family for their own, or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass the student.
- Confidential information about students should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than a need to know basis. In circumstances where the student's identity does not need to be disclosed, the information should be used anonymously.
- There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a student, eg when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases,

individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated student protection responsibilities.

- If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to the Principal or Vice Principal.
- Adults need to be aware that, although it is important to listen to and support students, they must not promise confidentiality or request students to do the same, under any circumstances.
- Additionally, concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to the Principal or Vice Principal without delay.

Dress and Appearance

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

Disciplinary Action

- Staff and volunteers should be aware that a failure to comply with this Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to dismissal.

Visitors to St Mary's

- In the interests of Student Protection and Safety **all** visitors to St Mary's should report immediately to **Reception** where they must sign the Visitors Book on arrival and departure and wear a Visitor Badge while on the premises.

Conclusion

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

In all circumstances, staff professional judgement will be exercised and this Code of Conduct Policy will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice.

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