

St Patrick`s P.S. Portrush



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Policy No	Signed by Chair BOG	Date Ratified by BOG
2		
Agreed Date	Review Date	Person Responsible for Review
	September 2024	Mr Dinsmore

All staff please sign and date below in line with the review of this policy

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1. Mission Statement

As a partnership of Children, Parents, Staff, Governors and the wider Community we aim to;

- Promote equality of opportunity for all children and staff.
- Ensure that everyone will experience an inclusive education where tolerance and understanding are promoted.
- Meet children's individual and collective needs.
- Provide a stimulating, secure and nurturing environment.
- Promote an ethos that is highly motivating and encourages all to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Provide an environment where we all feel secure, valued, respected and understood.
- Encourage all to have a positive self-image, high self-esteem and increasing confidence.
- Provide an environment which encourages active learning, investigation, creativity and challenge.
- Value and celebrate the richness and diversity of cultures and beliefs in our community.
- Celebrate achievement and progress in all areas of development.
- Display high standards of courtesy at all times.
- Encourage all to have a sense of responsibility for themselves, for each other and for their environment.

2. Our Child Protection Ethos

We in St. Patrick's Primary School have a responsibility for the safeguarding and child protection of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or harm to a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school

3. Related policies

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
- Attendance Policy
- Positive Behaviour Management Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints policy
- Data protection Policy
- Educational Visits
- E-Safety Policy

- First Aid and Administration of Medicines Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Records Management policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones Policy
- Whistleblowing policy

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing to have a copy should contact the school office or visit the school website at www.stpatricksportrushps.com

4. 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” (DOH, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools” (DENI Circular 2017/04) (update No.3 September 2023) and the Safeguarding Board for NI 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
- evidence based and informed decision making

5. St Patrick’s Safeguarding Team

- Principal (Mr Dinsmore)
- Designated Teacher (Mr Dinsmore)
- Deputy Designated Teacher (Mrs Turner)
- Deputy Designated Teacher (Mrs Mc Ivar)
- Chair of the Board of Governors (Mr. Shannon)

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Teacher/ Deputy Designated Teacher

Every school is required to appoint a Designated Teacher with responsibility for Child Protection. They must also appoint a Deputy Designated Teacher who as a member of the

Safeguarding team will actively support the Designated Teacher in carrying out the following duties:

- the induction and training of all school staff including support staff and volunteers
- being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff
- 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, Gateway
- making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where appropriate
- liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection
- keeping the school Principal informed
- lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy, and all other related policies
- promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school
- compiling written reports to the Board of Governors regarding child protection
- engage with Operation encompass

Principal

- as secretary to the Board of Governors, assist in fulfilling its safeguarding and child protection duties
- ensure the Board of Governors are kept fully informed of all developments relating to safeguarding including changes to legislation, policy, procedures, DE circulars, inclusion of Child Protection as an agenda item for each meeting.
- to manage allegations / complaints against school staff
- to establish and manage the operational systems for safeguarding and child protection
- to appoint and manage Designated Teachers who are enabled to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities
- to ensure safe and effective recruitment and selection including awareness of safeguarding and child protection for new staff and volunteers
- ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy or summary of the Child Protection policy at intake and at a minimum every 2 years.
- to maintain the schools Record of Child Abuse Complaints

Designated Governor for Child Protection

Advises the Board of Governors on: -

- the role of the Designated Teachers
- the content of child protection policies
- the content of a code of conduct for all staff and volunteers within the school
- the content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report; recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of all staff and volunteers.

All school staff (teaching and non-teaching) and Volunteers

All staff and Volunteers must attend Annual Child Protection training in August.

- All staff and Volunteers **must** refer concerns or disclosures initially to a Designated Teacher for Child Protection.
- All staff and Volunteers can complete a Note of Concern 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.
- All staff and Volunteers **must not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, **should not** investigate or ask leading questions.

Other Support Staff

- if any member of the support staff (Pre School staff, Catering staff, Bus Drivers, Swimming coaches, football coaches, etc..) has concerns about a child or staff member they should report these concerns to the Principal or a Designated Teacher using the note of concern. A factual written record will be made and any further necessary action will be taken.

Board of Governors

- 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.
- 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.
- there is an agreed code of conduct for all adults working in St Patricks.
- all school staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted, in line with DE Circular 2012/19
- Governors receive a full annual report on all child protection matters. This report includes 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 2023/2 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools: (updated September 2023)

Chair of Board of Governors

The Chair of the Board of Governors:

- has a pivotal role in creating and maintaining a safeguarding ethos
- receives training from CPSS and HR
- assumes lead responsibility in the event of a CP complaint or concern about the principal
- ensures compliance with legislation, Child Protection record keeping and policies

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 child.

It is essential that we have up to date contact details for every child's parent/carer. Data Collection forms may be sent home throughout the school year as required.

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.
- Provide a written explanation for any absences, (a written signed note, class Dojo message to the teacher, text message to school mobile phone, email to Principal)
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

7. Child Protection Definitions

Definition of Harm

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic 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:

Sexual abuse

Emotional abuse

Physical abuse

Neglect

Exploitation

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.

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 the opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

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.

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.

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

Although 'exploitation' is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR 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

8. Signs and symptoms of abuse

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, the following tables may help staff recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of abuse must be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree.

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of abuse, harm or significant harm. It is also possible that a child may show no outward signs of abuse and hide what is happening from everyone.

The following tables must not be taken as an exhaustive list of signs and symptoms of child abuse. The signs of abuse will be unique to the child.

Indicators of Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Unexplained bruises – in various stages of healing – grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations; or abrasions; untreated injuries;	Self-destructive tendencies; aggressive to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults;

bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday	improbable excuses to explain injuries; chronic runaway; uncomfortable with physical contact; come to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home; clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories
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Indicators of Neglect

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Looks very thin, poorly and sad; constant hunger; lack of energy; untreated medical problems; special needs of child not being met; constant tiredness; inappropriate dress; poor hygiene; repeatedly unwashed; smelly; repeated accidents, especially burns.	Tired or listless (falls asleep in class); steals food; compulsive eating; begging from class friends; withdrawn; lacks concentration; misses school medicals; reports that no carer is at home; low self-esteem; persistent non-attendance at school; exposure to violence including unsuitable videos.

Indicators of Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Well below average in height and weight; “failing to thrive”; poor hair and skin; alopecia; swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet;	Apathy and dejection; inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations; rocking/head banging; inability to play;

recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; sudden speech disorders; signs of self-mutilation; signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness); extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).	indifference to separation from family indiscriminate attachment; reluctance for parental liaison; fear of new situation; chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour; poor peer relationships.
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Indicators of Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to chest, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs; bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas; torn, stained or bloody underclothes; chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches; difficulty in walking or sitting; frequent urinary infections; avoidance of lessons especially PE, games; anorexia/gross overeating.	What the child tells you; Withdrawn; chronic depression; excessive sexual precociousness; seductiveness; children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal; over concerned for siblings; poor self-esteem; self-devaluation; lack of confidence; peer problems; lack of involvement; massive weight change; suicide attempts (especially adolescents); hysterical/angry outbursts; lack of emotional control; sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour; inappropriate sex play;

	repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories; vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; exposure to pornographic material.
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9. Specific types of abuse

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

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 parents/ carers and 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. Where there is evidence or reasonable suspicion of domestic violence and abuse in a household where children or young people reside, this may need to be dealt with in accordance with the procedures.

St Patrick's is linked to the Operation Encompass programme. This is a key partnership between schools and the PSNI to support pupils who may be involved in Domestic Violence. (February 2023)

You can read more about Operation Encompass at www.operationencompass.org.

Female Genital Mutilation

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 genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

FGM is a form of child abuse and, as such, staff have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, with the procedures outlined from page

The majority, of cases, are thought to take place between the ages of five and eight, putting children in this age bracket at highest risk.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial,

sexual and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in St Patricks we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

Grooming

Grooming of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child's/young person's loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

If the staff in St Patricks become aware of signs that may indicate grooming they will inform the Principal in line with the school's child protection policies and procedures.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017)

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity in return for something they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible 'rewards' OR 'benefits' such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging.

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. The abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis.

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the school's child protection policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

10. Children with increased vulnerabilities

Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English and sexual orientation. We have included information about children with increased vulnerabilities in our policy.

Children with a disability

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

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

Children with limited fluency in English/ Asylum Seeker and refugee pupils

As with children with a special educational need, children who are not fluent in English (newcomer pupils/AsR) should be given the chance to express themselves to a member of staff or other professional with appropriate language/communication skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred. At St Patricks we use Class Dojo to support translation of key messages.

Designated Teachers should work with colleagues with responsibility for newcomer pupils, seeking advice from the EA's Inclusion and Diversity Service to identify and respond to any particular communication needs that a child may have. We will aim to create an atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or pupils for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them

Pre-school pupils

Many of the issues in the preceding paragraphs will be relevant to our young children who may have limited communication skills. St Patricks will support Causeway Pre-school with Safeguarding concerns as they arise. In addition to the above, all staff will follow our Intimate Care policy and procedures in consultation with the child's parent[s]/carer[s].

Looked After Children

In consultation with other agencies and professionals, a Health and Social Care Trust may determine that a child or young person's welfare cannot be safeguarded if they remain at home. In these circumstances, a child may be accommodated through a voluntary arrangement with the persons with parental responsibility for the child or the HSCT may make an application to the Court for a Care Order to place the child or young person in an alternative placement provided by the Trust. The HSCT will then make arrangements for the child to be looked after, either permanently or temporarily. It is important that the views of children, young people and their parents and/or others with parental responsibility for the looked after child are taken into account when decisions are made.

The Designated teacher will attend LAC meetings and will provide a written report if requested. Where necessary, school support will be put in place for the child/young person. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a need to know basis.

Children / young people who go missing

Children and young people who go missing come from all backgrounds and communities and are known to be at greater risk of harm. This includes risks of being sexually abused or exploited although children and young people may also become homeless or a victim or perpetrator of crime. Those who go missing from their family home may have no involvement with services as not all children and young people who run away or go missing from their family home have underlying issues within the family or are reported to the police as missing.

The patterns of going missing may include overnight absences or those who have infrequent unauthorised absences of short time duration. When a child or young person returns, having been missing for a period, we should be alert to the possibility that they may have been harmed and to any behaviours or relationships or other indicators that children and young people may have been abused.

School staff will work in partnership with those who look after the child or young person who goes missing and, if appropriate, will complete a risk assessment. Current school policies will apply e.g. attendance, safeguarding, relationships and sexuality education.

Young people in supported accommodation

Staff will work in partnership with those agencies involved with young people leaving care and those living in supported accommodation and will provide pastoral support as necessary.

Young people who are homeless

If we become aware that a young person in our school is homeless we will share this information with Social Services whose role is to carry out a comprehensive needs and risk assessment. We will contribute to the assessment and attend multi-disciplinary meetings.

Separated, unaccompanied and trafficked children and young people

Separated children and young people are those who have been separated from their parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver. Unaccompanied children and young people are those seeking asylum without the presence of a legal guardian. Consideration must be given to the fact that separated or unaccompanied children may be a victim of human trafficking.

Child Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child or young person, whether by force or not, by a third person or group, for the purpose of different types of exploitation.

If we become aware of a child or young person who may be separated, unaccompanied or a victim of human trafficking, will immediately follow our safeguarding and child protection procedures

Children of parents with additional support needs

Children and young people can be affected by the disability of those caring for them. Parents, carers, or siblings with disabilities may have additional support needs which impact on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the family, possibly affecting their education or physical and emotional development. It is important that any action school staff take to safeguard children and young people at risk of harm in these circumstances encompasses joint working between specialist disability and children's social workers and other professionals and agencies involved in providing services to adult family members. This will assist us in ensuring the welfare of the children and young people in the family is promoted and they are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

Where it is known or suspected that parents or carers have impaired ability to care for a child, the safeguarding team will give consideration to the need for a child protection response in addition to the provision of family support and intervention.

Gender identity issues and sexual orientation

Young people from the LGBTQ community may face particular difficulties which could make them more vulnerable to harm. These difficulties could range from intolerance and homophobic bullying from others to difficulties for the young person themselves in exploring and understanding their sexuality. At such times young people may be more vulnerable to predatory advances from adults seeking to exploit or abuse them. This could impede a young person's ability or willingness to raise concerns if they feel they are at risk or leave young people exposed to contact with people who would exploit them.

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

11. Work experience, school trips and educational visits

Our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people also includes periods when they are in our care outside of the school setting. We will follow DE guidance on educational visits, school trips and work experience to ensure our current safeguarding policies are adhered to and that appropriate staffing levels are in place.

Residential settings

Children in the above setting are particularly vulnerable to abuse. We will ensure that staff are appropriately vetted and trained in accordance with DE guidance, if the school is engaged in a residential activity.

12. Children/young people's behaviours

Peer abuse

Children and young people may be at risk of physical, sexual and emotional bullying and abuse by their peers. Such abuse should always be taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. Where a child or young person has been harmed by another, all school staff should be aware of their responsibilities in relation to both children and young people who perpetrate the abuse as well as those who are victims of it and, where necessary, should contribute to an inter-disciplinary and multi-agency response.

Self-harm

Self-harm encompasses a wide range of behaviours and things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way, which are damaging. It may indicate a temporary period of emotional pain or distress, or deeper mental health issues which may result in the development of a progressive pattern of worsening self-harm that may ultimately result in death by misadventure or suicide. Self-harm may involve abuse of substances such as alcohol or drugs, including both illegal and/or prescribed drugs.

Self-harming behaviours may indicate that a child or young person has suffered abuse; however, this is not always the case. School staff should share concerns about a child or young person who is self-harming with a member of the safeguarding team who will seek advice from appropriately qualified and experienced professionals including those in the non-statutory sector to make informed assessments of risk in relation to self-harming behaviours.

Suicidal ideation

Staff must act without delay if they have concerns about a child or young person who presents as being suicidal as it is important that children and young people who communicate thoughts of suicide or engage in para-suicidal behaviours are seen urgently by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, including those in the non-statutory sector, to ensure they are taken seriously, treated with empathy, kindness and understanding and informed assessments of risk and needs can be completed as a matter of priority.

Children who display harmful sexualised behaviour

Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child's development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. As a school we support children and young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships. Teachers are often therefore in a good position to consider if behaviour is within the normal continuum or otherwise.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as 'healthy', 'problematic' or 'sexually harmful'. Healthy sexual behaviour will normally have no need for intervention, however consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting. Problematic sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. For example, a one-off incident may simply require liaising with parents on setting clear direction that the behaviour is unacceptable, explaining boundaries and providing information and education. Alternatively, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the EA CPSS may be required. We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2016/05 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

What is Harmful Sexualised Behaviour?

Harmful sexualised behaviour is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when:

- There is no informed consent by the victim; and/or
- the perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim
- Harmful sexualised behaviour can include: Using age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Using sexual violence or threats.
- Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older - particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not.

- However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them - for example, if the older child is disabled.

Sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the school's positive behaviour management policy but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

Harmful sexualised behaviour will always require intervention and in our school we will refer to our child protection policy and, seek the support that is available from the CPSS.

13. Online Safety

Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, social environments and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

In January 2014, the SBNI published its report 'An exploration of e-safety messages to young people, parents and practitioners in Northern Ireland' which identified the associated risks around online safety under four categories:

- **Content risks:** the child or young person is exposed to harmful material.
- **Contact risks:** the child or young person participates in adult initiated online activity.
- **Conduct risks:** the child or young person is a perpetrator or victim in peer-to-peer exchange.
- **Commercial risks:** the child or young person is exposed to inappropriate commercial advertising, marketing schemes or hidden costs.

We in St Patricks have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of pupils accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The school's actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the pupils in the school or on school-organised activities.

Sexting is the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobile or over the internet. There are two aspects to Sexting:

Sexting between individuals in a relationship

Pupils need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the

picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual relationship) and in these cases we will contact local police on 101 for advice and guidance. We may also seek advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service.

Please be aware that, while offences may technically have been committed by the child/children involved, the matter will be dealt with sensitively and considering all of the circumstances and it is not necessarily the case that they will end up with a criminal record. It is important that particular care is taken in dealing with any such cases. At St Patricks we do not want to discourage a young person from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of a sexual image.

Sharing an inappropriate image with an intent to cause distress

If a pupil has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that it is **not forwarded to anyone else**. Schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015

(www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted) to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent.

If a young person has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures of the school will be followed.

14. Responding to safeguarding and child protection concerns

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. Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm¹.

How a parent can raise a concern

In St Patricks we aim to work closely with parents/carers in supporting all aspects of their 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 Principal or a designated teacher. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. If a parent still has concerns they can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman.

At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Central Referral Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the **flowchart**

¹ Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (August 2017)
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

Where School has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff

In St Patricks if a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, the member of staff will complete a Note of Concern and act promptly. **They will not investigate** - this is a matter for Social Services - but will discuss these concerns with the Designated Teacher or with the Deputy Designated Teacher if he/she is not available.

The Designated Teacher will consult with the Principal taking care to avoid delay. If required, advice may be sought from an Education Authority Child Protection Officer. The Designated Teacher may also seek clarification from the child or young person, their parent/carer.

If a child protection referral is not required the school may consider other options including monitoring, signposting or referring to other support agencies e.g. Family Support Hub with parental consent and, where appropriate, with the child/young person's consent.

If a child protection referral is required, the Designated Teacher will seek consent from the parent/carer and/or the child {if they are competent to give this} unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm.

The Designated Teacher will phone the Gateway team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI referral form. Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed of the action taken.

Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff or a Volunteer

When a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff the Principal (or the Designated Teacher if the Principal is not available) must be informed immediately. If the complaint is against the Principal, then the Designated Teacher should be informed and he/she will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority. The procedure as outlined in **Appendix 5** will be followed.

Consent

Concerns about the safety or welfare of a child/young person, should, where practicable, be discussed with the parent and consent sought for a referral to children's social services in the local HSC Trust, unless seeking agreement is likely to place the child/young person at further risk through delay or undermine any criminal investigative process (for example in circumstances where there are concerns or suspicions that a crime has taken place); or there is concern raised about the parent's actions or reactions. The communication/language needs of the parents/carers should be established for example in relation to disability/ethnicity and

the parent's/carer's capacity to understand should be ascertained. These should be addressed through the provision of appropriate communication methods, including, where necessary, translators, signers, intermediaries or advocacy services.

Effective protection for children/young people may, on occasions, require the sharing of information without prior parental/carer consent in advance of that information being shared.

Where staff decide not to seek parental consent before making a referral to children's social services in the local Health and Social Care Trust or the police, the reason for this decision must be clearly noted in the child/young person's records and included within the verbal and written/UNOCINI referral.

When a referral is deemed to be necessary in the interests of the child/young person, and the parents/carers have been consulted and do not consent, the following action should be taken:

- the reason for proceeding without parental consent must be recorded;
- the withholding of permission by the parent/carer must be included in the verbal and written referral to children's social services;
- the parent/carer should be contacted to inform them that, after considering their wishes, a referral has been made.

Staff making a referral may ask for their anonymity to be protected as far as possible because of a genuine threat to self/family. In such instances this anonymity should be protected with an explanation to the staff member that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as information may become the subject of court processes.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

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

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

Record Keeping

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

In order to meet these requirements all child protection records, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in our school are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher and Principal have access to them. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from child's date of birth plus 30 years. If information is held electronically, whether on a laptop or on a portable memory device, all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected.

These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

15. Safe Recruitment Procedures

Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals' access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system and schools must ensure that all persons on school property are vetted, inducted and supervised as appropriate. All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in St Patricks are vetted / supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

16. Code of Conduct for all Staff and Volunteers

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 members of staff are expected to comply with the school's Code of Conduct for all staff and Volunteers which has been ratified by the Board of Governors

St Patrick's Code of Conduct for all staff and Volunteers is available on request

17. The Preventative Curriculum

The statutory personal development curriculum requires schools to give specific attention to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers a medium to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours. (2017/04)

1. St Patrick's P.S seeks to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resiliencies of children so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations.
2. Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through class and whole school events and there is a permanent child protection notice board in the main corridor and relevant information in each resource area, which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers. St Patricks promotes other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues: e.g. fire service, police, health visitor, parent programmes.

18. Monitoring and evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Team and approved every 2 years by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. It will be implemented through the school's staff induction and training programme and as part of daily routines. Compliance with the policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the Principal and Designated Teachers for Child Protection. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Teacher.



Who do I contact if I have a potential child protection concern

I have a concern about my/a child's safety



I can talk to a teacher or any member of staff I feel comfortable with

Tel. 07916278738



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Designated Teachers for Child Protection Mr Dinsmore or Mrs Turner

Tel.- 07916278738



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chair of Board of Governors Mr Shannon



If I am still concerned, I can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman

Tel: 0800 343 424



I can talk to the local Children's Services Gateway Team 02870325462 or the PSNI Central Referral Unit at 028 9025 9299



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

Member of staff completes the Note of Concern on what has been observed or shared and must ACT PROMPTLY.

Source of concern is notified that the school will follow up appropriately on the issues raised.



Member of staff discusses concerns with the Designated Teacher or Principal



Designated Teacher should consult with the Principal or other relevant staff before deciding upon action to be taken, always taking care to avoid undue delay. Advice may be sought from a CPSS officer.

**Child Protection referral
is required**

Designated Teacher seeks consent of the parent/carer and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm then telephones the Children's Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI if a child is at immediate risk. He/she submits a completed UNOCINI referral form within 24 hours.



Designated Teacher clarifies/discusses concern with child/ parent/carers and decides if a child protection referral is or is not required.



**Child Protection referral
is not required**

School may consider other options including monitoring the situation within an agreed timescale; signposting or referring the child/parent/carers to appropriate support services such as the Children's Services Gateway Team or local Family Support Hub with parental consent, and child/young person's consent (where appropriate).

Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed as to the action taken. The Designated Teacher will maintain a written record of all decisions and actions taken and ensure that this record is appropriately and securely stored.

CONFIDENTIAL

NOTE OF CONCERN

CHILD PROTECTION RECORDS – REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER(s)

Name of pupil:		
Year Group: Primary		
Date & Time of Incident/Disclosure:		
Nature & 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 where and when:		
Any further action taken:		
Written Report passed to Designated Teacher:	Yes:	No:
If 'No' state reason:		
Date and time of report passed to the designated teacher:		
Written Note from staff member placed on the child'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: _____

This record must be stored securely in line with GDPR and school policy Mr. Dinsmore Sept. 2023

