

# **STEELSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY UNIT**



## **Child Protection/ Safeguarding Policy**

**Agreed by Staff :**  
**Presented to B.O.G:            2017**  
**Ratified by B.O.G :**  
**Review Date: December 2018**

## **Article 6**

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to make sure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

### **Introduction**

The Child Protection policy is an intrinsic part of the overall pastoral programme of the School and aims to ensure that the welfare of all children in Steelstown Primary School is safeguarded and their safety preserved. The ethos of a "listening" school with its emphasis on openness and honesty of communication between School Management Team and staff, teacher and teacher, teacher and parent, teacher and pupil, parent and pupil and pupil and pupil is the cornerstone of ensuring such safety. Children who feel threatened in any way are encouraged to speak out to another person and the school's ethos, pastoral programme and administrative structures are designed to ensure that opportunities for and encouragement towards such openness is paramount. The emphasis on the caring role of the teacher and the centrality of good relationships inherent in our school vision places considerable responsibility on all teaching staff to be alert to the risk of emotional abuse of children, such as persistent sarcasm, verbal bullying or severe and persistent negative comments and actions. Equally, it is incumbent upon the school to ensure that the protection of children is at a maximum by reducing the likelihood of physical or sexual abuse within school. All members of staff are thus encouraged to reflect on every aspect of their contact with children so they will promote an atmosphere in which trust and openness can do much to detect the potential abuse of children while sensitive and sensible professional behaviour towards pupils will significantly reduce the risk of allegations against staff being made. At the heart of the school policy is the belief that, as a Christian community, all those in the school - pupils and staff - should be accorded the dignity that comes from their baptism in Christ and that all relationships should, therefore, reflect the teaching of Christ.

### **1. CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING RATIONALE**

We in Steelstown Primary School and Nursery Unit have a responsibility for the Safeguarding, Pastoral Care and general welfare of the children in our care. 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. Child Protection is one important aspect of Safeguarding and promoting welfare, an activity undertaken to protect **specific** children who are suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm as a result of abuse. To fulfil our responsibilities in relation to Child Protection specifically, all teaching and non-teaching staff should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school

### **2. PRINCIPLES**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Pastoral Care in Schools- Child Protection" (DENI Circular 99/10) and the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005). We have also taken cognisance of DENI Circular 2016/05 Children who display harmful sexualised behaviour and Circular 2016/20 Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in N.I.

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy/Safeguarding Policy

- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- In any incident the child's welfare must be paramount; this overrides all other considerations.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first.

### 3. SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is a broad term and team approach and 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:

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Safe Recruitment
- Anti-Bullying
- Special Educational Needs
- Educational Visits
- First Aid
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Administration of Medication
- Health and Safety Policy
- Health Education Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- UICT and acceptable use of internet
- Positive Behaviour Management & Discipline Policy
- Taking and Use of photographs
- Intimate Care Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- E-Safety Policy
- RSE/PDMU Policies

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing a copy should contact the School Office.

#### Aims

The specific aims of the policy are:

- To enhance the pupils' self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness and personal safety by developing appropriate skills to make reasoned, informed choices, judgements and decisions through a pastoral programme, offering opportunities for class and group discussion of thoughts and feelings in an atmosphere of tolerance and trust.
- To ensure that staff and parents are well-informed about Child Protection issues and that staff are familiar with procedures for reporting concerns, their duty of care and responsibility to report and the various indicators of child abuse and neglect
- To provide a model for appropriate and effective communication between children, teachers, parents and other adults working with children
- To integrate the key concepts of Child Protection in the school curriculum through units of work in the pastoral programme
- Intimate care is provided for students when needed (**See Intimate Care Policy**)
- To monitor children's welfare and physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs.

#### **4. SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

The following are members of the schools Safeguarding Team

- Chair of the Board of Governors: Mrs Siobhan Heaney
- Designated Governor for Child Protection: Mrs Catherine Mc Laughlin
- Designated Teacher: Miss Jacinta Hegarty
- Deputy Designated Teacher: Mrs Siobhan Gillen
- Designated Teacher for Nursery Unit: Mrs Mary Mc Laughlin
- ICT Co-ordinator: Miss Aoibheann Flood

#### **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **5.1 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 EANI Child Protection Support Service for Schools, the EANI Governor Support and Human Resource departments.
- Ensure that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive termly updates and a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity

##### **5.2 The Designated Governor For Child Protection**

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

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

##### **5.3 The Board of Governors**

Board of Governors must ensure:

- that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy;
- Relevant Child Protection training is kept up-to-date by at least one governor and a record kept of the same;
- that confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to an entire Board of Governors on a need-to-know basis.

#### **5.4 The Principal**

The Principal must ensure that: -

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

#### **5.5 The Designated Teacher (And Deputy)**

The Designated teacher and Deputy must

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role
- Organise training for all staff (whole school training)
- Lead in the development of the school's Child Protection Policy
- Act as a point of contact for staff (and parents)
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents
- Make referrals to Social Services (Gateway team) or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate
- Liaise with the Education Authority - Western Region's Designated Officer for Child Protection.
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- Keep the School Principal informed
- Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection

#### **5.6 School Staff**

School staff see children over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and hear allegations of abuse.

The staff must:

- refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teacher for Child Protection;
- listen to what is being said and support the child
- act promptly
- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed through the written "Record of Concern or Disclosure" proforma (appendix 5) or verbally 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 pupil abuse or serious bullying, concerns about home conditions
- 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

## 5.7 The Parents

Parents should play their part in Child Protection by:

- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's situation;
- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the child after school;
- letting the school know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home;
- familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Internet and Child Protection Policies;
- reporting to the office when they visit the school
- raising concerns they have in relation to their child with the school.

## 6. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

### **6.1 Definition of Abuse**

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child.

Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act, or of failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both. The abuse may take a number of forms, including:

### **6.2 Types of Abuse**

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

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

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying

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

**Domestic Abuse** - "threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation". DHSSPS /NIO Tackling Violence at Home, 2005, p10

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

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

**Exploitation** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a 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 i.e. grooming.

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

#### **Identifying Abuse:**

Teachers and non-teaching staff are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. *Such symptoms may be due to a variety of causes and these may be identified with some sensitive questioning by the designated teacher*, but the following symptoms should be noted:

- bruises, particularly of a regular shape which may indicate the use of an implement such as a strap, or the mark of a hand, lacerations, bite marks and burns - may be apparent when children change their clothes for P.E. or games
- inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparently deficient nutrition - may be signs of physical neglect
- excessive dependence or attention-seeking - may be an indication of emotional abuse  
physical signs, withdrawal, inappropriate sexual behaviour and precocity - may be indicators of sexual abuse

Victims of abuse often display emotional or behavioural difficulties but the signs described above can do no more than give cause for concern - they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. More detailed indications of abuse are to be found in the document "Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection" with which all teachers should be familiar. Copies are available from Mrs Gillen/Miss Hegarty. Members of staff concerned that such abuse has occurred must report this immediately to **Mrs Gillen, Miss Hegarty or Mrs McLaughlin**. Miss Hegarty is the Designated Teacher and Mrs Gillen is the deputy Designated Teacher and Mrs McLaughlin is designated Nursery Child Protection Teacher and they have specific

responsibility for child protection. Where a child approaches a member of staff to confide in him/her any information likely to lead to suspicion of child abuse, the member of staff must recognise that, in order to protect the child, confidentiality must be subordinated to the need to take appropriate action by involving others in the child's best interests. *No promise of confidentiality can or should ever be given where abuse is alleged.*

### 6.3a Harmful sexualised behaviour

In reference to DENI circular 2016/05 our Child Protection/Safeguarding policy must take cognisance of three levels of concern. (See Appendix 2)

#### **Procedures: Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse**

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.

- **Receive** - listen to what the child says, without displaying shock or disbelief. Accept what is said, making brief cursory notes. These notes should be retained.
- **Reassure**- ensure the child is reassured that he/she will be safe and his/her interests will come first. No promise of confidentiality can or should be made to a child or anyone else giving information about possible abuse.
- **Respond**- respond to the child only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer the matter. Use open questions e.g. anything else to tell me? Do not interrogate or ask leading questions- this may invalidate your evidence and the child's in any later court proceedings. Do not criticise the perpetrator- the child may love this person and reconciliation may be possible. Explain what you have to do next and to whom you have to talk.
- **Record**- make notes at the time and write these up as soon as possible afterwards. Note the time, date, place, people present as well as what is seen and said. Record key phrases/words used, noticeable non-verbal behaviour and any physical injuries. Under no circumstances should a child be photographed or a child's clothing removed. Do not destroy original notes.
- **Report**- refer the matter to the Designated Teacher

Respect confidentiality i.e. the matter should only be discussed on a need to know basis.

Any allegation by a child that he or she is suffering or has suffered abuse will be treated seriously and will immediately trigger the reporting procedures. Where teachers see signs that cause them concern, they should

Seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding (Non-teaching staff should immediately bring their concern to the designated teachers).N.B. Steelstown Primary School staff are not the investigator ! Be aware that the way they ask questions or talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings

- they should not ask the child leading questions
- they should listen carefully and assure the child that he/she is believed
- they should not ask the child questions which encourage the child to change his/her version of events or impose the adult's own assumptions
- they should LISTEN and not interrupt if the child is recalling events freely

- they should make a note - verbatim, where possible - to pass on to the designated teachers recording time, date, place, people present, what was said and any signs of physical injury.
- they should *under no circumstances* remove a child's clothing
- they should not give the child any promise of confidentiality
- they should be aware that the notes taken may need to be used in subsequent court proceedings

### 3. Refer the matter to Designated Teacher for Child Protection .

The teacher designated as responsible for child protection will then:

1. Make sensitive enquiries of the child concerned
2. Refer the case to or consult with social services (or the police, where appropriate)
3. Notify the Principal and the Chairperson of the Board of Governors
4. Miss Hegarty, Vice-Principal will also liaise with the Educational Welfare Officer
5. Make clear to both Principal and Chairperson the way the designated teacher will keep them informed
6. Make sure that they are informed of the timing of the strategy discussion between the statutory agencies, contribute to this discussion by telephone and clarify with the investigating agencies when, how and by whom the parents and the child will be told that a referral has been made.
7. Co-operate with the preparation of any case conference held by the Social Services Department and the Key Worker appointed by them.
  - *Where the designated teacher is suspected to or alleged to have abused a child, the member of staff who is made aware of the possible offence should inform the principal immediately, who will instigate normal reporting procedures.*
  - *Where the Principal is suspected to or alleged to have abused a child, the matter should be reported to the designated teacher who will report the matter immediately to social services (or the Police, where appropriate) and to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.*

### **Considerations for Parents and Other Adults:**

Parents should play their part in Child Protection by:

- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence so that the Office is reassured as to the child's situation
- discussing with their child the units of work in the pastoral programme on self-esteem, assertiveness, bullying, sex education and child protection
- informing the school whenever anyone other than themselves intend to pick up the child after school
- ensuring that they know which after-school clubs their child attends
- familiarising themselves with the school's Pastoral Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Child Protection Policy.
- Other adults helping school staff or leading out of school activities which result in having substantial access to children will be subject to vetting by a Police check. Parents and helpers will be required to provide their written consent to such vetting.
- Parents receive a summary of the pastoral care provision in the school from the designated teacher each year.

- All visitors to the school must report to the office and receive an identification badge. Staff must meet visitors and escort them in the school; any visitor without a badge is challenged by staff.
- An electronic access system requires all visitors to call at and register in the Reception.

## **7. PROCEDURES FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO CHILD ABUSE**

### **7.1 How a Parent can make a Complaint**

At Steelstown Primary School and Nursery Unit 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 3.

### **7.2 Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff**

Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a child they should not investigate - this is a matter for the Social Services - but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher, discuss the matter with her and make full notes. These notes or records should be of a factual, objective nature and include what was seen, said, heard or reported, the place and time of who was present and should be given to the Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The designated teacher will decide whether in the best interest of the child the matter needs to be referred to the Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately.

The Designated Teacher may need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information or from others who may have relevant information. The Designated Teacher may also consult with the Education Authority - Western Region's Designated Officer for Child Protection or Social Services (Gateway Team) before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our prime priority.

If there are concerns that the child or young person may be at risk, the Designated Teacher is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the Designated Teacher will telephone the Western Health & Social Services Gateway Team. She will also notify the Education Authority - Western Region's 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 with a copy sent to the Education Authority - Western Region's Designated Officer for Child Protection.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in Appendix 3.

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.

Do's	Don'ts
Do listen to what the child says.	Don't ask leading questions.
Do assure the child they are not at fault.	Don't put words into the child's mouth.
Do explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret.	Don't ignore the child's behaviour.
Do <b>document exactly</b> what the child says, using his/her exact words.	Don't remove any clothing.
Do remember not to promise the child confidentiality.	

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay calm</li> <li>• Listen</li> <li>• Accept</li> <li>• Reassure</li> <li>• Explain what you are going to do</li> <li>• Record accurately</li> <li>• Seek support for yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Promise to keep secrets</li> <li>• Ask leading questions</li> <li>• Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily</li> <li>• Delay</li> <li>• Start to investigate</li> <li>• Do Nothing</li> </ul>

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

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Designated Teacher (or the Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal. If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed and he/she will ensure that necessary action is taken.

Where the matter is referred to the Social Services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will also be informed immediately.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the agreed disciplinary procedures for staff, a detailed record of the

complaint, signed by the Principal, shall be retained on the child's file and the file of the member of staff concerned. An entry will also be made in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints.

If, on foot of a subsequent investigation by one of the investigating agencies, the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated, the record on the file of the member of staff concerned shall be expunged, and the entry in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints deleted or struck through.

However, where disciplinary investigation or action is undertaken in the context of child protection, all details relating to the complaint and disciplinary sanction shall be maintained on the staff member's file for a period of 5 years. The record on the child's file should be noted accordingly, and should be maintained indefinitely in case there should be subsequent complaints. In all other cases, the record on both the child's file and the staff member's file should be maintained indefinitely

The school's record of Child Abuse complaints will be made available to the Board of Governors/Management Committee at least annually.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in Appendix 4.

#### **7.4 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a volunteer**

Any complaint about the conduct of a person working in the school in a voluntary capacity should be treated in the same manner as complaints against a person who is on the school's staff, and the above procedures followed. If the Principal has any concern that a child may be at risk, the services of the volunteer should be terminated immediately.

### **8. ATTENDANCE AT CHILD PROTECTION CASE CONFERENCES AND CORE GROUP MEETINGS**

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher or Principal may be invited to attend an initial and review child protection Case Conferences or core group meeting convened by the Western Health & Social Care Trust and where possible a school representative will be in attendance. A written report will be provided for these meetings and will be compiled after discussion with relevant staff. (see appendix 5B). Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored in line with what has been agreed in each child's protection plan;

### **9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies and where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, a legal duty to report this. However, only those who need to know will be told.

## **10. RECORD KEEPING**

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person.

If a complaint about possible child abuse is received by the school and is not referred to Social Services - or if it is referred and Social Services do not place the child's name on the Child Protection Register - a record on the child's file will be permanently preserved and a confidential copy will be sent to any school to which the child subsequently transfers.

If the Social Services inform the school that child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, a record of this fact and associated documentation from the Social Services will be maintained on the child's file while he or she continues to attend our school.

When the child's name is removed from the child protection register then all Social Services records will be destroyed and only the school records retained for permanent preservation. Should a child transfer to another school whilst their name is on the child protection register then we will inform the receiving school that his/her name is on the register and the name of the child's social worker. All Social Services records held by us in relation to the child will then be destroyed. The schools own child protection records in relation to the child will be held in secure and confidential storage for permanent preservation. Please refer to Appendices 5(a) and 5 (b), 5 (c) for recording proformas used to record concerns.

## **11. VETTING PROCEDURES**

All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in the School are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

## **12. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF PAID OR UNPAID**

All actions concerning 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. The school has a code of conduct for staff which is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector.

The schools code of conduct is included as Appendix 6.

## **13. STAFF TRAINING**

Steelstown Primary School and Nursery Unit is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on Policy and procedures with some members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and annual refresher training. 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.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school Child Protection Policy and code of conduct and given a copy of the policy which includes what to do if you are worried that a child is being abused.

All governors are familiar with the DE "School Governors Handbook on Child Protection". The school complies with the statutory requirements on vetting of all staff and governors, employment of substitute teachers and recruitment of staff in accordance with 2006 Circulars. The Board receives an annual report on Child Protection and maintains records of any suspicions or allegations of abuse by staff. Staff receive annually a copy of the Child Protection Policy and appropriate training from the Designated Teacher. Members of staff are specifically made aware of the Sexual Offences Act 2003: a new criminal offence of abuse of trust and a new offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming.

#### **14. THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM**

In the classroom, regular Circle Time sessions are used as a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self confidence, respect and sensitivity among classmates.

Key concepts in relation to child protection and keeping safe at home, school and in the community are developed through various curricular topics and lessons in PDMU, Religious Education and World Around Us. Examples of these include topic based work on "Safe and Sound" (Primary 4 pupils), on-going fire and road safety education, "Stranger Danger" etc.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through class assemblies and there is a permanent child protection notice board in the main corridor and relevant information in each resource area, which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers. A flow diagram of how a parent may make a complaint is also on display. An enlarged flow diagram for a teacher allegation is displayed in the staff room.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues:

- Youth Educated in Safety project (Primary 6 pupils)
- Anti-Bullying week activities
- CEOPS internet safety programme
- Hope North West Programme on Drugs and Alcohol.
- Volunteers from the NSPCC deliver the Childline Keeping Safe Programme to Primary 6 & 7 pupils every 2 years.

#### **On-Line Safety**

Online safety messages are integrated across the curriculum for pupils in all Key Stages.

- Online safety messages are distributed amongst pupils, staff, parents/carers and the wider community.
- The school's leadership and management have clearly prioritised online safety and safeguarding across all areas of the school.
- Knowledge is shared amongst staff and there are good capacity-building opportunities.

## **15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Steelstown primary School and Nursery Unit will review this policy annually by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and it will be approved every 2 years by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. It will be implemented through the schools staff induction and training programme and as part of day to day practice. Compliance with the policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and periodically by the Schools Safeguarding Team. 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 School Management Team and designated teachers will conduct an annual review of the child protection procedures and policy statements each May to ensure that they are fit for purpose. A statement in the prospectus each year will indicate that such a review has taken place in order to reassure parents that their child is as safe as possible in the school. Parents are free at any time in the course of the year to suggest improvements/amendments to the procedures for consideration at the next review meeting. Parents are also consulted biennially via questionnaire on the school's Child protection procedures. The Principal and Vice-Principal will keep parents informed, through the school prospectus or Governors Report, of the School's Child Protection Policy. Parents may obtain a printed copy free of charge on request from the school.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

Approved by Board of Governors:  
Next Policy Review Date: December 2018

## Appendix 1

### Signs and Symptoms of abuse – possible indicators

#### Physical Abuse

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
<p>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; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday</p>	<p>Self- destructive tendencies; aggressive to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; 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</p>

#### Neglect

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

#### Emotional Abuse

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
<p><b>Well below average in height and weight;</b> <b>“failing to thrive”;</b> poor hair and skin; alopecia; swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet; 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).</p>	<p>Apathy and dejection; inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations; rocking/head banging; inability to play; indifference to separation from family indiscriminate attachment; reluctance for parental liaison; fear of new situation; chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour; poor peer relationships.</p>

## Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<p><b>Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs;</b> 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, showers; unexplained pregnancies where the identity of the father is vague; anorexia/gross over-eating.</p>	<p>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 - 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.</p>

### **Child Abuse in Other Specific Circumstances**

#### **Bullying**

Bullying is not defined as a category of abuse within the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005). The policy does however state that the damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children and at the extreme cause them significant harm (including self harm).

The procedure for referral and investigation of abuse may therefore be implemented in certain circumstances such as when anti-bullying procedures have failed to be effective; bullying is persistent and severe, resulting in the victim suffering/likely to suffer significant harm; there are concerns that the bullying behaviour is indicative of the bully suffering/likely to suffer significant harm or where concerns exist in relation to the parents/carer's capacity to meet the needs of the child (either victim or bully).

#### **Young Person whose Behaviour places him/her at Risk of Significant Harm**

A child whose own behaviours e.g. self-harming behaviour, leaving school without permission etc. places him/her at risk of significant harm, may not necessarily constitute abuse as defined in Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005). The decision to initiate child protection procedures is a matter for professional judgement and each case will be considered individually with advice sought from a EA Designated Officer for Child Protection. The criminal aspects of such cases will be dealt with by the PSNI.

## **Domestic Abuse**

The definition of domestic abuse is:

"threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation". DHSSPS / NIO Tackling Violence at Home, 2005, p10

A child may live in a family where there is domestic abuse or a young person may be in a relationship where they become the subject of domestic abuse. In high risk cases involving domestic abuse Social Services and/or the EA Designated Officer for Child Protection PSNI will contact the school in order to help assess the child/young person's needs and to ensure that he/she receives appropriate support.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Harmful sexualised behaviour**

When abuse of a child is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the procedures outlined in this policy will be followed. It is important in such situations to distinguish between behaviours which are experimental in nature and those that are exploitative and harmful. Advice and support will be sought in such circumstances from a EA Designated Officer for Child Protection and where appropriate a referral made to the statutory agencies. In all such cases a risk assessment will be undertaken and an individual support and safety plan identified. Appropriate services will also be provided for the children involved.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

"Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.'

(SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).

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.

The potential indicators of CSE can include, but are not limited to:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phone etc without plausible explanation;
- Leaving home/care without permission;
- Persistently going missing or returning late;
- Receiving lots of texts/phone calls prior to leaving;
- Agitated/stressed prior to leaving home/care;
- Returning distraught/ dishevelled or under the influence of substances;
- Truancy from school;
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age;
- Physical symptoms or infections e.g. bruising, bite marks, sexually transmitted infections;
- Concerning use of the internet;
- Entering or leaving cars driven by unknown adults or by taxis;
- New peer groups;
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours;
- Low self-esteem;
- Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less);
- Self harm and other expressions of despair;

- Evidence or suspicion of substance misuse.

Whilst these indicators can be usefully used to identify potential risk, it is important to note that their presence does not necessarily mean that CSE is occurring. More importantly, nor does their absence, mean that it is not.

### **Indecent Photographs**

The offence of taking indecent pictures of children under 18 years can apply in a situation where a pupil has taken an indecent picture using a mobile phone of others under 18 years of age. It is also an offence to distribute, possess with intent to distribute or show such photographs to others. In such circumstances the PSNI and Social Services will be contacted.

### **Healthy Sexual Behaviour may include some of the following characteristics:**

- Mutual
- Consensual
- Exploratory and age appropriate
- Not intended to cause harm
- Fun / humorous
- Without power differentials

Healthy sexual behaviour has generally no need for intervention however there may be instances when interventions are applied, for example, it is not appropriate when displayed in school or during school activities. This may therefore be an opportune time for teachers to positively reinforce appropriate behaviour, drawing on the recently issued guidance issued by the Department on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

### **Problematic Sexual Behaviour may include some of the following characteristics:**

- Not age appropriate
- One off incident of low key touching over clothes
- Result of peer pressure
- Spontaneous rather than planned
- Lacking in other balancing factors e.g. no intent to cause harm, level of understanding, acceptance of responsibility
- Targeting other children, to irritate and make feel uncomfortable. Often the children are not scared and can feel free to tell someone
- Concerning to parents / carers, supportive
- Sometimes involving substances which disinhibit behaviours

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. However, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the Education Authority CPSSS may be required. The CPSSS will advise if additional advice from PSNI or Social Services is required.

**Harmful Sexualised Behaviour may include some of the following characteristics:**

- Lacks the consent of the victim
- When the perpetrator uses threats or violence (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce or intimidate the victim
- Uses age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases
- Involves inappropriate touching
- Involves sexual behaviour between children - it 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.
- Involves a younger child abusing an older child, particularly if they have power over them - for example, if the older child is disabled.

Harmful sexualised behaviour will always require intervention and schools should refer to their own child protection policy and, seek the support that is available from the CPSSS - see the paragraph on 'Advice and Support', below.

Early therapeutic intervention has a high success rate and few children and young people will continue to engage in harmful sexualised behaviour.

## Appendix 3

### How a Parent can make a Complaint

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



I can talk to the class/form teacher



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Miss Jacinta Hegarty or the Deputy Designated Teacher, Mrs Siobhan Gillen



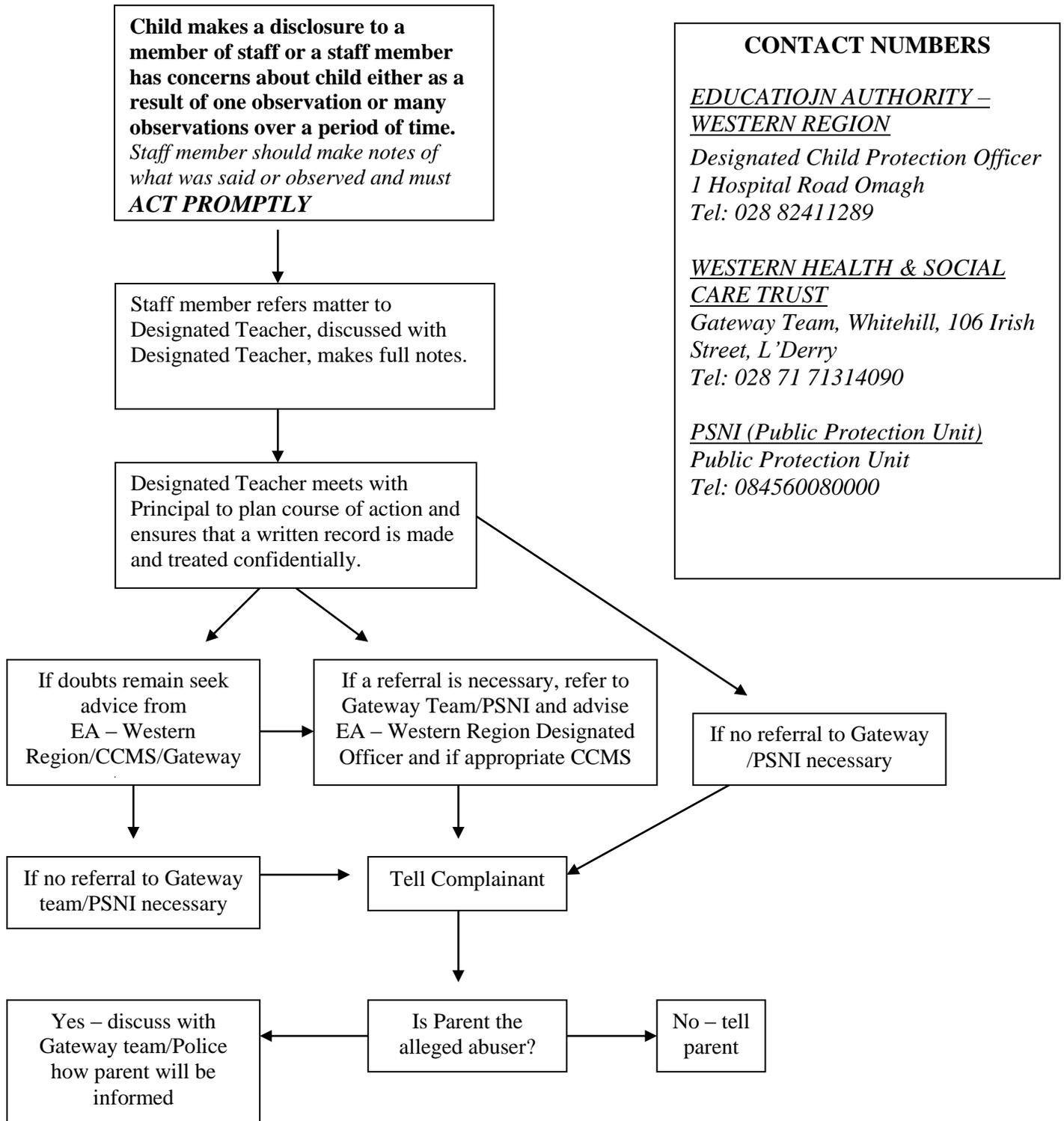
If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, Mrs Siobhan Heaney



*At any time a parent can talk to a social worker at the Gateway Team (Western Trust) Tel: **028 71314 090**  
or the  
PSNI at the Public Protection Unit Tel: **0845 600 80000***

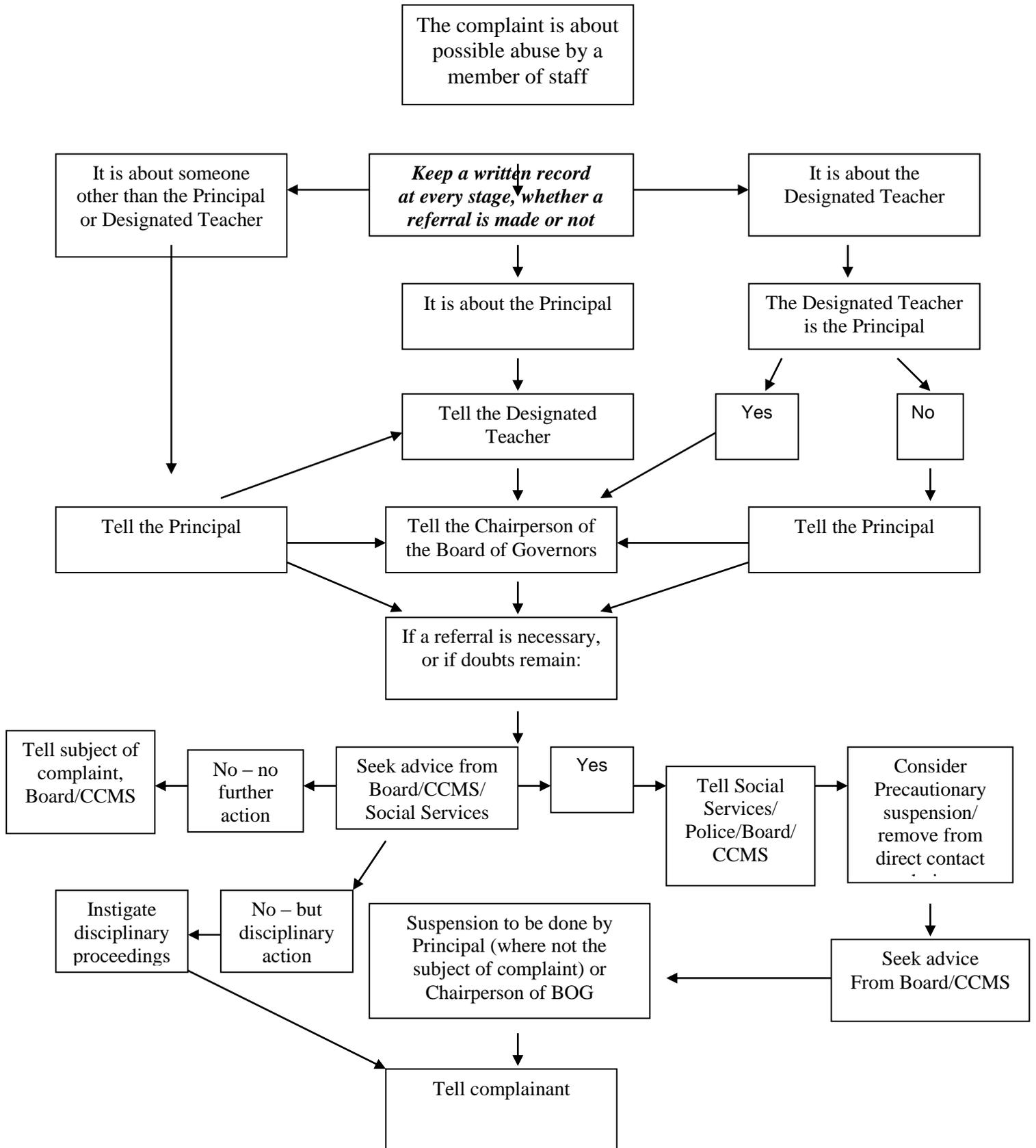
**Appendix 4**

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



**Appendix 5**

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



## Appendix 5a

### Steelstown Primary School & Nursery Unit Child Protection Record of Concern or Disclosure

Complete and pass to Designated Teacher (DT) for Child Protection as soon as possible on the same day. If not available pass to Deputy DT or Principal.

Pupil's Name:	Class/Year Group	
	DoB:	
Concern identified by:	Date:	
	Time:	
Nature of Concern / details of disclosure / other relevant information. If a disclosure has been made record actual words used by the child/young person.		
<i>Continue on reverse if needed</i>		
Passed to:	Received by:	
	Date:	
Action taken by DT/DTT/Principal		
Signed: _____ Date: _____		
(DT/DDT/Principal)		

**Appendix 5b**

**STEELSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY UNIT  
CHILD PROTECTION UPDATE RECORD**

**Name**

**Date of Birth:**

**Class:**

**Home Address:**

**School Attendance: Current Year:**

**Presentation:**

**Attainment/ Progress:**

**Homework:**

**Relationship with Staff**

**Relationship with Peers:**

**Other relevant information/factors e.g. special needs, extra help provided, social & emotional needs, behavioural issues:**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Principal**



5 (b)

**STEELSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY UNIT**

**CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT REPORT – FORM B**

Child's Initial \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Details of Incident

Person completing the report \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to school \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if person making the report is not known)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 6

# STEELSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY UNIT

## CODE OF CONDUCT

### Private Meetings with Pupils

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.
- Staff should be mindful of the potential risks involved in the use of social networking sites accessed by pupils.

### Physical Contact with Pupils

- As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Staff who have to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*
- Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to his/her line manager.
- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of schools activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

## **Choice and Use of Teaching Materials**

- Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. Schools have already received advice on the value of consulting parents and Governors when proposing to use materials such as the AIDS education for schools and in connection with sex education programmes.
- If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the principal before using it.

## **Relationships and Attitudes**

Within the Pastoral Care Policies of the school and the employing authority, staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

## **Conclusion**

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

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