

# Child Protection Policy

## Summary:

Our policy aims to set out clearly the procedures and regulations relating to the Protection and Safeguarding of students at Strangford College.

Policy Number: 2017/1  
Revision: 1

Board of Governors

Submission for Ratification:  
April 2017.

**Chairperson:**



**Principal:**



This policy replaces any previous policies and is valid from:

1<sup>st</sup> April 2017

To be reviewed & updated by:

31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.



Article 3 – ‘Adults should always do what is best for you’  
Article 6 – ‘You have the right to live and grow and no one should prevent you from doing this’.  
Article 12 – You should have a say in decisions that affect you.’

If any parent, member of staff or pupil, has concerns about the possible abuse or the welfare of a child, those concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the  
Deputy  
Designated Teacher.

Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mr Gareth Boal

Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection: Mrs Clare Foster  
Mrs Gillian Gibson

**This policy has been updated on the 1 March 2017 by Mrs C Foster Deputy Principal and Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection**

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## **Introduction**

In accordance with the aims of the College and in order to fulfil our statutory obligation under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which requires schools to play their part in the prevention and reporting of child abuse, this Policy aims to ensure protection for all our pupils. The central thrust of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 is that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration and it is this essential principle which underpins the Policy which follows.

## **Aims of the Policy**

1. To ensure that staff act in the best interests of the child at all times
2. To inform all staff (teaching and Non-Teaching) of statutory requirements re suspected or alleged child abuse.
3. To provide all staff with definitions of abuse.
4. To provide guidelines for recognition of signs of suspected abuse.
5. To enable parents to make a complaint or report of child abuse if necessary.
6. To provide clear procedures for staff to follow in a case of suspected abuse.
7. To explain the roles and obligations of personnel involved in reporting suspected abuse
8. To provide guidelines for the protection of staff dealing with pupils.
9. To provide support for staff to cope with the anxieties of initial reporting, and the aftermath of involvement in suspected abuse.
10. To help create a protective and supportive environment for all pupils and staff.

## CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE

### Definition of Abuse:

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 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.

**(Ref: 2.6, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. March 2016)**

Child abuse occurs in families from all social classes and cultures and it also occurs in agencies and organisations. Abusers come from all walks of life and all occupations and professions. The following is an extract from “Co-operating to Protect Children”; (DHSS Guidance and Regulations).

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

- neglect: 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.  
**(Ref: 2.6, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. March 2016)**
- physical: is deliberately hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.  
**(Ref: 2.6, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. March 2016)**
- 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.  
**(Ref: 2.6, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. March 2016)**
- emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child’s emotional development.  
Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may

involve bullying –including on-line bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones- by a child’s peers.

**(Ref: 2.6, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. March 2016)**

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

**(Ref: 2.6, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. March 2016)**

- Child sex exploitation: a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status.

**(Ref: 2.6, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. March 2016)**

(Each of these definitions uses the term ‘actual or likely’. For practical purposes, ‘actual’ can be taken to mean ‘confirmed’, i.e. that the teacher is satisfied that the abuse has actually happened, and ‘likely’ can be taken to equate with ‘potential’ or ‘suspected’, i.e. that the teacher believes that the abuse probably happened, or will, or will probably, happen.)

## **POSSIBLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHILD ABUSE**

Since they are in regular and frequent contact with pupils, school staff are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse or unexplained changes in behaviour or performance, which may indicate abuse.

In all cases where symptoms displayed by a child give rise to concerns about possible abuse, or about the welfare of the child, the teacher or other member of staff should report these concerns to the Designated Teacher. A parent or other carer may also give information to a member of staff of the school which gives rise to concern about possible child abuse by someone outside the school, or by a person working in the school in a volunteer capacity. The member of staff should advise the person making the complaint that the matter will be brought to the attention of the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher.

It is not possible to give complete lists of symptoms, only indicators of abuse. The following signs do not necessarily point to abuse, as they can be due to other medical or social reasons, but if staff are concerned by any or a combination of these signs, they should pass on their concerns to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher.

A child who is neither being abused nor at risk of abuse may nevertheless be in need of help from Social Services, and such cases need to be made known to Social Services. Social Services welcome indications of concern at an early stage, and often can provide assistance to a family and prevent circumstances from reaching a stage when child protection proceedings become necessary.

- **Signs of Physical Abuse**

- unexplained injuries or burns particularly if they are recurrent
- improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- refusal to discuss injuries
- untreated injuries
- disclosure of punishment which appears excessive
- fear of parents being contacted
- bald patches
- withdrawal from physical contact
- arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- fear of returning home
- fear of medical help
- self-destructive tendencies
- aggression towards others
- chronic running away

- **Signs of Emotional Abuse**

- physical, mental and emotional development delay
- disclosure of punishment which appears excessive
- over-reaction to mistakes
- continual self-deprecation
- sudden speech disorders
- fear of new situations

- inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
  - neurotic behaviour
  - self-mutilation
  - fear of parents being contacted
  - extremes of passivity or aggression
  - drug/solvent abuse
  - chronic running away
  - compulsive stealing/scavenging
- **Signs of Neglect**
    - constant hunger
    - poor personal hygiene
    - constant tiredness
    - poor state of clothing
    - emaciation
    - frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
    - untreated medical problems
    - destructive tendencies
    - low self-esteem
    - neurotic behaviour
    - no social relationships
    - chronic running away
    - compulsive stealing or scavenging
- **Signs of Sexual Abuse**
    - being chronically depressed/suicidal
    - using drugs/drink excessively/self-mutilation
    - unexplained pregnancies
    - being anorexic/bulimic
    - chronic running away
    - being inappropriately seductive
    - being fearful about certain people like relatives and friends
    - not being allowed to go out on dates or have friends around
    - soreness, bleeding in the genital or anal areas or in the throat
    - excuses not to go home or to a particular place
    - recurring nightmares/being afraid of the dark
    - being unable to concentrate/playing truant
    - a sudden change in school/work habits
    - having a friend who has 'a problem'
    - chronic ailments such as stomach pains/upsets and headaches
    - sexually abusing a child sibling or friend
    - being withdrawn, isolated/becoming excessively worried
    - outbursts of anger or irritability
    - being fearful of undressing for PE
    - having unexplained sums of money

For a fuller, more detailed list of signs and symptoms of abuse please consult Appendix II of the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures. (Copy available from Mr G Boal)

## **THE ROLES OF THE DESIGNATED AND DEPUTY DESIGNATED TEACHERS**

The designated teachers in Strangford College are Mr G Boal, Mrs C Foster and Mrs G Gibson. The principal Mr M Weir has over- all responsibility for child protection. They have responsibility for:

- ensuring that all staff are aware of the procedures, including internal school arrangements,
- co-ordinating actions by teachers in cases of suspected child abuse and reporting to the appropriate agencies
- ensuring that the teaching staff and the school's Education Welfare Officer are aware of children in care or on the Child Protection Register.

Strangford College recognises the importance of the role played by the designated teachers and will enable them to carry out the duties of that role effectively and with appropriate training. The designated teachers and indeed all teachers need to know:

- how to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and when to make referral;
- the Child Protection procedures and the Education Authority's policy and procedures and the designated teacher's role within them;
- the role and responsibilities of the investigating agencies, who to contact and how to liaise with them;
- the requirements of record-keeping;
- the conduct of a Child Protection conference and how the designated teachers or another member of staff can make an appropriate contribution to it.

## THE REPORTING PROCESS FOR CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

### Responding to abuse

- On suspicion:
- Be the sort of person a child or young person can talk to
- Be available and prepared to listen
- Discuss concerns with DT or DDT
- Don't sit back and ignore signs
- Don't keep things to yourself.
- Don't rely on someone else to take action.

### On disclosure:

- Remain calm, accessible and receptive.
- Listen carefully.
- Be aware of non-verbal cues.
- Make it clear you take the pupil seriously.
- Reassure them and commend their courage.
- RECORD what they say, using their actual words.
- Tell Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher as soon as possible.
- No promise of confidentiality can or should ever be made to a child or anyone else giving information about possible disclosure

### On disclosure: DO NOT:

- Promise not to tell anyone else.
- Ask leading questions....ask simply: what happened?
- Express disbelief in what pupil is telling you.
- Seem to reproach pupil.
- Keep it to yourself.
- Do nothing.
- Make angry or insulting comments about the alleged abuser.
- Attempt to investigate.

### What to record:

- Facts, in neutral language.
- Nature of information.
- Days, dates and times.
- Evidence and observations.
- The DT or DDT will also record:
- Personnel advised and referrals made to.
- Decisions taken and reasons
- A record will be signed and dated by principal and countersigned by DT or DDT.

## **The five Rs**

RECEIVE – listen to what a child says but do not ask leading questions except when to show you have understood;

REASSURE – ensure the child is reassured that he/she will be safe and their interests come first;

RESPOND – only to ensure the child is safe and secure

RECORD – make note of what you have seen or heard and the date and time;

REFER – refer to the Designated Teacher as soon as you have any concern for a child

## **Procedure for reporting an incident of child abuse in Strangford College**

Child makes a disclosure to a member of staff, or a member of staff has concerns about a child either as a result of one observation or many observations over a period of time. The member of staff does not investigate but **MUST ACT PROMPTLY**

The member of staff refers matter to one of the designated teachers; discusses issue with the designated teacher, and makes full notes.

Designated teacher meets with Principal (in case of Principal's absence Deputy Principal) to plan a course of action and ensures that a written report is made.

Principal/ Designated Teacher makes a referral using the UNOCINI FORM to:

- Social Services and Care Unit Copies of proforma to:
- EA Designated Officer

Indicate that it is a Child Protection issue in an envelope marked **CONFIDENTIAL**

If there is any doubt about whether to take further action, advice is available from

- EA Designated Officer
- Social Services

When seeking advice you do not give any names.

You are making an enquiry.

## **Other Action**

Record Advice given

Monitor and review

If a member of staff requires support following a disclosure from a student, this will be offered by a member of the safeguarding team and where necessary Inspire.

## ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF

A complaint or allegation may be made, in the context of child protection, about the conduct or activities of a member of staff towards a pupil or pupils.

If the complaint has not been made directly to the Principal and he/she is not the subject of the complaint, it should be referred directly to him/her by the person to whom it was made. To form a clearer view of the complaint, the Principal 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. It is not, however, the responsibility of the school to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers. Deciding what to do when such an allegation is made is a difficult and sensitive matter. The need to protect children must be paramount, but the need to protect members of staff against unfounded, but nonetheless potentially damaging, allegations must also be considered.

The Principal should also bear in mind that the behaviour complained of may constitute an arrestable offence.

The Principal will immediately:

- inform the Designated Teacher (if he/she is not the subject of the complaint), who will initiate the record of the complaint;
- consult the Chairperson of the Board of Governors;
- consult the EA Designated Officer for Child Protection.

The Principal (where he/she is not the subject of the complaint), in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, will decide that:

- a) the allegation is apparently without substance, and no further action is necessary; or
- b) an immediate referral to the Social Services or the PSNI is warranted; or
- c) the allegation concerns inappropriate behaviour which needs to be considered under the disciplinary procedures.

Clear, detailed allegations which give rise to concerns about possible abuse or inappropriate sexual conduct, either verbal or physical, towards a child, whether or not corroborated, should always merit a referral.

Where it is decided that no further action is necessary, it is the Principal's responsibility to:

- advise the member of staff concerned (where this has not already been done) that a complaint has been made and the nature of it; and also of the fact that it is considered to be without substance and no further action is being taken.
- advise the complainant, in writing, of the action taken on foot of the complaint and its outcome, including information on other means of pursuing their complaint if they

remain dissatisfied: for example, to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, including how he/she can be contacted through the school.

The Principal should place a brief record of the complaint on the file of the pupil concerned, indicating the nature of the complaint, when, by whom and to whom it was made, and a short explanation why it was considered that no further action should be taken, together with copies of any correspondence on the complaint.

Where the Principal decides that a formal referral of the complaint is necessary, it is his/her responsibility to ensure that the following are notified immediately:

- the Social Services or, especially where physical or sexual abuse is suspected or alleged, the PSNI;
- EA Designated Officer for Child Protection.

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors should bring the matter to the attention of the Board of Governors at the next available opportunity.

In all cases where the Principal has decided that a formal referral is warranted the member of staff should be immediately removed from direct contact with children and should undertake non-contact duties; depending on the nature and severity of the allegation and the potential risk to children, it may be necessary for the member of staff to be suspended immediately. Where a suspension is implemented by the Principal, the Chairperson or, in his/her absence, the Vice-Chairperson, must be informed immediately. All members of the Board of Governors must be informed of the suspension as soon as possible. Once a decision has been taken to make a formal referral and that the member of staff will be suspended, he/she should be advised, in writing, of the nature of the allegation and the reason for precautionary suspension, and should also be advised to seek professional advice before making any form of response. The right of the member of staff to consult with a recognised trade union representative should always be respected. Where the member is initially informed verbally of his/her suspension, written notification should follow as soon as possible.

The person making the complaint (and the pupil's parent, where different) should also be informed immediately, in writing, of the decision to make a formal referral and of the suspension of the member of staff concerned.

Where a formal referral is made it is particularly important that the Principal should ensure that a detailed written record of the complaint, including dates and times, is maintained. This record should be signed and dated by the Principal, counter-signed by the Designated Teacher (where neither is the subject of the allegation) and retained in the school, on the files of both the pupil and the member of staff concerned. An entry should also be made on 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 must be expunged, and the entry in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints deleted or struck through. The record on the pupil's file should be noted accordingly, and should stand until the pupil's twenty-first birthday 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.

Where a member of staff receives a complaint concerning possible child abuse by the Principal, all aspects of the above procedures for complaints against a member of staff should be followed, save that the role set out above for the Principal should be exercised by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, in whom the power to suspend is vested.

School authorities must notify the Department of Education of any instance where a teacher is dismissed on grounds of gross misconduct, so that his or her further employment as a teacher can be considered.

A complaint may be made in the context of child protection about the conduct or behaviour of a member of staff towards a pupil or pupils which, in the opinion of the Principal, does not warrant a formal referral as a child protection matter but nevertheless warrants pursuit as a disciplinary matter. In such an instance, the disciplinary procedures agreed by the Teachers' Negotiating Committee and issued to all schools should be followed, but in addition the Principal should ensure that details of the complaint and the disciplinary sanction, including dates and details of all spoken communications and copies of all correspondence, are maintained on the file of both the member of staff and the pupil or pupils concerned, for a period of 5 years, and a summary entered in the College's Record of Child Abuse Complaints. (It should be noted that this recording procedure in disciplinary cases applies only to those cases raised in the context of child protection.) As soon as possible after the decision is taken, the complainant should be informed that the complaint is being pursued under disciplinary procedures, and he/she should be kept regularly informed of the proceedings and the result, including the sanction taken, as appropriate.

## **HOW A PARENT CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT A POSSIBLE CHILD PROTECTION ISSUE**

If a parent or guardian has a concern about the safety of his/her own child or any other child, the parent/guardian should contact the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or Deputy Designated Teacher without delay.

Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mr G Boal

Deputy Designated Teachers: Mrs C Foster, Mrs G Gibson

The Designated Teacher(s) will inform the Principal and will carry out a discreet preliminary investigation. The Designated Teacher(s) will refer the matter to Social Services if it is deemed necessary and will report back to the parent/guardian on the progress and outcome of the complaint as soon as possible. If a parent/guardian is still concerned he/she may contact the Principal directly.

If the parent/guardian is dissatisfied with the outcome he/she may refer the complaint to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

**In the event of bullying occurring in school teachers should consult the School's bullying policy.**

**Printed Policies are always available from Mr G Boal and Mrs C Foster.**

## THE SELECTION AND USE OF VOLUNTEERS AND SPORTS COACHES TO SUPPORT SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Volunteers can have an important and beneficial role in supporting the work of teachers and other paid staff in schools and in contributing to the life of the school. Ensuring that schools obtain the maximum benefit from the involvement of volunteers requires careful preliminary planning to ensure that the volunteer has appropriate and worthwhile duties, understands and is equipped to carry out his/her role and can complement and support the activities of the teacher or other member of staff. It is also essential that appropriate steps are taken, through screening and selection arrangements, to ensure that children are not placed at risk through allowing the unsupervised and unmanaged access of unsuitable adults to the school.

The engagement of volunteers will only be undertaken with the knowledge and agreement of the Principal. Acceptance of any individual's offer of help should not be automatic. Appropriate areas of work and the duties attached to these, the supervisory arrangements, the implications for Child Protection and the conditions attached to the volunteer's role will be clearly established before any volunteer is accepted by the school.

All potential volunteers will be asked to provide the following information:

- Personal details such as name (including any previous names) and address, date of birth and any relationship with the school e.g. parent, relative of member of staff;
- Details of any qualifications and of any previous work with children;
- A declaration that they have never been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound-over Order;
- A declaration as to whether they have been investigated by Social Services for child protection (and the outcome of the investigation) or had a child removed from their care.
- The names of two referees who are not family members or members of the staff of the College.

The volunteer must agree to submit an application for an Enhanced Disclosure to be carried out by Access NI. Volunteers will not commence work until the Access NI process has been satisfactorily completed.

The volunteer must attend an interview with the Principal or his nominee.

Some fundamental principles are observed in using volunteers in the school:

- i. The purpose of the volunteer is to assist staff, whether teaching or non-teaching. They should not be used as substitutes either to cover activities normally undertaken by paid staff who are absent, or to release such staff to undertake other duties;
- ii. Volunteers should only work under the supervision and guidance of paid staff and these arrangements should be such as to minimise the opportunities for direct, unsupervised, access to pupils;

- iii. Volunteers should not be placed in a position of sole responsibility for the security of pupils, premises or equipment;
- iv. Volunteers should understand the tasks which they are to undertake and receive appropriate training to enable them to perform these;
- v. Volunteers should only be allocated duties after consultation and agreement with the teacher or other member of staff with whom the volunteer will be most closely involved;
- vi. Volunteers should not be afforded access to records or other information relating to staff or pupils. An exception might be made where a pupil has a medical or other condition of which all those working with him/her should be made aware, and where the agreement of the parent has been sought.

Volunteers are owed a duty of care under the requirements of Health and Safety legislation. The College will therefore ensure that volunteers are treated no less favourably than paid employees in terms of the school's obligations under the legislation.

The volunteer will receive information on:

- The school's behaviour and discipline policies and the extent of the volunteer's authority within them;
- Child protection procedures.

#### Complaints against a Volunteer/Sports Coach

Any complaint about the conduct of a volunteer or sports coach will be treated in the same manner as complaints against a member of staff.

If the Principal has any concern that a pupil may be at risk the services of the volunteer will be terminated immediately.

The volunteer/sports coach should report any issue of concern relating to the welfare of pupils to the Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher.

#### Sports Coaches – Additional Checks

In addition to an Enhanced Disclosure being carried out by Access NI evidence will be sought of:

- A current qualification through a national governing body coaching award;
- Successful completion of specific training in work with children and young people or previous experience of working with children and young people over a period of time.

Sport Northern Ireland has produced a Code of Conduct for coaches (Appendix III).

## **TRAINING**

The criteria governing all courses of initial teacher training (ITT) require newly qualified teachers to have acquired the necessary foundation to develop a working knowledge of their contractual, legal, administrative and pastoral responsibilities as teachers. Within that framework, it is a matter for individual institutions to determine appropriate coverage, in ITT courses, of awareness and recognition of child abuse, reporting arrangements, roles and responsibilities within education and the need for the education service to work together with the other statutory agencies. Strangford College recognises the need for appropriate in-service training on Child Protection issues for all those involved in implementing these procedures. EA has the responsibility to make appropriate in-service training in consultation with schools. This training should include induction training for newly qualified teachers, and provide opportunities for designated teachers to attend multi-agency Child Protection training. In-service training should aim to maintain a working awareness among staff of Child Protection issues and procedures.

## **INDEMNITY FOR TEACHERS**

The Board of Governors of Strangford College indemnifies its employees who act in accordance with these procedures in reporting any incident of child abuse or suspected child abuse.

## PROFESSIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT

### Introduction

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 children and young people in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

### Code of Conduct

#### 1. Private Meetings with Pupils

- a. Staff should be aware of the dangers that 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.
- b. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff is advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room. Written records of all meetings with pupils should be kept
- c. 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.

#### 2. Physical Contact with Pupils

- As a general principle, staff is advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- 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. (DENI Circular 1999/9, on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (Power of member of staff to restrain pupils).
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Schools should, in particular circumstances, such as use of certain areas like the photographic darkroom, draw up their own guidelines for these circumstances.

- 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 likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the designated teacher for child protection.

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

- Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. Parents should be consulted when proposing to use materials such as those in sex education / relationship education programmes or other areas where parents may wish to withdraw their children
- Where sensitive topics are being taught as part of the curriculum, teachers should ensure that all teaching materials have been agreed within head department and, if necessary, approved by the Senior Link Teacher and/or the Principal before using it. All materials should be available to parents upon request.

### 4 **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 is dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

### 5 **School Trips and Residential**

In the event of a child protection issue arising during a trip or residential all child protection procedures will be adhered to as far as possible and a report made to the designated teacher immediately. A statement to this effect will be included in risk assessments.

### 6. **Child Protection Training**

Child Protection Training will also be given to students within school who are dealing with other school aged pupils, e.g. Special Olympics, Community Link

## **Conclusion**

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard 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.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If employees have any particular circumstances, they should consult their line manager or a representative of the professional association.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young people, 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.

**Policies on specific issues such as use of physical restraint/intimate care/ use of images/ school trips/ extended school activity can be found in the DENI circulars. (Copies of DE circulars are available from Mr G Boal). These are listed at the end of this policy.**

**"The Preventative Curriculum," see child Protection November report, appendix 3, safe guarding initiatives.**

**The school's E-Safety policy which is directly linked to the Child Protection policy.**

## REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

### SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION: DE CIRCULARS

- ☐ Circular 99/10  
Guidance for schools on child protection policy and procedures
- ☐ Circular 03/13  
Guidance for schools on the Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003
- ☐ Circular 06/06  
Guidance on safer recruitment practices for education authorities
- ☐ Circular 06/07  
Guidance for schools on the employment of substitute teachers
- ☐ Circular 06/08  
Guidance for schools on the requirement for child protection training in relation to interviewing and selection panels
- ☐ Circular 06/09  
Guidance on the vetting of paid and unpaid staff
- ☐ Circular 06/25  
Guidance on the requirement for vetting of school governors
- ☐ Circular 07/01  
Acceptable use of the internet and digital technologies in schools
- ☐ Circular 08/03  
Pre-employment checking of persons to work in schools – new arrangements
- ☐ Circular 08/10  
From 1st August 2008 substitute teachers must be booked on line via NISTR
- ☐ Circular 2010/01  
Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education
- ☐ Circular 2010/18  
Every School a Good School – The Governors’ Role
- ☐ Circular 2011/22  
Internet Safety (addendum to 2007/01). Advice and guidance on arrangements for preventing the accessing of inappropriate material on the internet, the use of materials from blocked sites, and the provision of information to parents.
- ☐ Circular 2012/18  
Replaces Circular 2010/07. New aspect: guidance on study leave

☐ Circular 2012/19

Disclosure and barring arrangements: changes to pre-employment vetting checks for volunteers working in schools from 10 September 2012.

☐ Circular 2013/01

Disclosure and barring arrangements. Guidance for Schools and employing authorities on pre-employment vetting checking and safer recruitment practices.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **SOURCES OF ADVICE**

Whether or not to make a referral, which could activate a Child Protection investigation, is a serious decision.

Confidential advice is available from:

- The EA Designated Officer for Child Protection;
- or
- Social Services (without disclosing names) as indicated in the 'Flow Chart'.

However if a designated teacher or Principal has a general concern about a child's health or development, he or she may wish to seek advice, information or guidance from a number of local services in addition to those listed above namely:

- NSPCC
- Clinical Medical Officer
- School Nurse
- Education Welfare Officer
- Educational Psychologist

See DENI Circular 1997/4 for contact names and addresses.

## Appendix 2

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COACHES

#### Sport Northern Ireland

#### Coaches/Volunteers

Coaches/volunteers are expected to:

- Ensure the safety of all children by careful supervision, proper pre-planning of coaching sessions, using safe methods at all times.
- Actively encourage all children and not to discriminate on the grounds of religious beliefs, race, gender, social classes or lack of ability.
- Not allow any rough or dangerous play, bullying, or the use of bad language or inappropriate behaviour.
- Always be positive and to promote the objectives of the club at all times.
- Not let any allegations of abuse of any kind to go unchallenged or unrecorded if appropriate. Incidents and accidents to be recorded in the club incident/accident book. Parents will be informed.
- Report accidents or incidents of alleged abuse to the designated person.
- Administer minor first aid in the presence of others and where required refer more serious incidents to the club "first aider"
- Have access to telephone for immediate contact to emergency services if required.
- Foster team work to ensure the safety of youth members in their care
- Ensure the rights and responsibilities of youth members are enforced
- Report suspected abuse to the appropriate designated officer
- Not abuse members physically, emotionally or sexually
- Maintain confidentiality about sensitive information
- Be a role model (disciplined/committed/time keeping), remember children learn by example
- Refrain from smoking and consumption of alcohol during club activities or coaching sessions
- Protect themselves from false accusation by:
  - Not spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
  - Avoid taking children alone in a car on journeys, however short
  - Never taking children to their home.
  - Not administering First Aid involving the removing of children's clothing unless in the presence of others.

#### Coaches/Volunteers have a right to:

- Access on going training and information on all aspects of leading/managing activities for youths, particularly on child protection
- Support in the reporting of suspected abuse
- Access to professional support services
- Fair and equitable treatment by the Governing Body
- Be protected from abuse by children/youths, other adult members and parents
- Not to be left vulnerable when working with children

Any misdemeanours and general misbehaviour will be dealt with immediately and reported verbally to the designated person.

Persistent breach of the code will result in dismissal from the club.

Dismissals can be appealed by the coach/volunteer with final decisions taken by the club committee.

## Strangford College

### Child Protection

#### How a Parent / Pupil can raise a concern or complaint

