

SAINT CATHERINE'S COLLEGE

Coláiste Chaitríona, Ard Mhacha



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Revised June 2020

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

As a listening and a pupil-centred school, our School Aims and Code of Conduct underpin the rationale expressed and enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991. The most important tenets of that Convention are:

“children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence; they must be kept safe from harm; and they must be given proper care by those looking after them. When adults or organisations make decisions which affect children, they must always think first about what would be best for the child.”

In Saint Catherine’s College we have an excellent Pastoral Care structure in place and pride ourselves on being a ‘listening school’. As a staff we will continue to:-

- promote an atmosphere of trust and an environment in which our pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- devise and deliver through the vehicle of Relationship Days, Living Faith sessions, PSHE work, preventative programmes which educate about interpersonal relationships and normative behaviour, and where appropriate give information about child abuse;
- ensure that pupils are aware of the school counselling structure;
- recognise the rights and needs of our pupils by regularly updating our own knowledge and expertise.

PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THIS POLICY IS BASED

- The child’s welfare must always 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 remain paramount.
- Children have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously.
- Parents/Carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters which concern their family.

- Actions taken to protect a child (including investigation) should not cause the child unnecessary distress or add to any damage already suffered.
- Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation but in the context of the family.
- All agencies concerned with the protection of children must work together on an inter-agency bases in the best interests of children and their families.

**Every child or young person has the
fundamental right to be safe and have
the proper care afforded them.**

(From the Children (NI) Order 1995)

PROCEDURES

Saint Catherine's College recognises its five main responsibilities in the area of Child Protection, namely:

1. PREVENTION
2. RECOGNITION
3. RESPONSE
4. REFERRAL
5. CONFIDENTIALITY/RECORD KEEPING

1. PREVENTION

As a 'listening and caring' school, we in Saint Catherine's College offer a supportive environment through our Pastoral structure to children and young people who are being abused, have been abused and may be abused in the future.

The Board of Governors ensures that the

- Curriculum includes programme which address 'keeping safe', encourage good interpersonal skills and enhance self esteem
- School has and follows the Code of Practice for the conduct of all members of staff, towards the pupils attending the school.

2. RECOGNITION

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 failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care or both.

Forms of abuse include:

- **NEGLECT** – the significant or persistent neglect of a child or young person, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger including cold or starvation, a persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child’s health or development including non-organic failure to thrive.

Possible indicators: inadequate food/clothing/supervision/shelter, poor growth/hygiene.

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE** – the actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, a wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

Possible indicators: reports of hitting, bruises, lacerations, bite marks or burns.

- **EXPLOITATION** - is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or 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, 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.

- **SEXUAL ABUSE** – the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family roles. It may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts. It may include non-contact activities such as the

involvement of children in the production of sexual images or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, including via e-technology.

Possible indicators: physical signs, substantial behavioural change including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** – the actual or likely persistent, deliberate or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. It may involve bullying, including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones by a child’s peers.

Possible indicators: excessive dependence, attention seeking.

3. RESPONSE

If an allegation of child abuse is made to a member of staff, that person will

- Listen to the child or young person and accept what is said.
- Record the date, time, place, statement and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour.
- Reassure the child or young person they have done the right thing to talk about it.
- Refer information to Miss Catriona Mc Call (Designated Teacher for Child Protection) or in her absence Mrs Denise Moore/Mrs Marie Mc Manus/Mrs Louise Mc Gilly/Mrs Monique Rennie/Mrs Edel Mc Kenna (**Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection**)

4. REFERRAL

The Designated Teacher will discuss the matter with Mrs Noeleen Tiffney (School Principal) as a matter of urgency and ensure a written record is made.

The Principal/Designated Teacher may seek clarification or advice from the Education Authority, or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school will make a referral.

Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Designated Teacher will inform in writing:

Chairman of the Board of Governors

and make a written referral using UNOCINI form to:

Child Protection Officers, EA

Social Services

The school will continue to support the child, the family and any external agencies who become involved in any way possible.

5 CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

In addition to the above named personnel, it is envisaged that the child's Year Head/Head of Key Stage could give invaluable support and reassurance to the child and indeed to his/her parents. Any information of a Child Protection nature is securely stored on the school premises and only accessed by the Safeguarding Team.

The school co-operates fully with all relevant external agencies, including the PSNI and, where concerns arise regarding a pupil's welfare, will provide contact details/relevant information if requested.

**PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE
IN SAINT CATHERINE’S COLLEGE**

Pupil makes a disclosure to adult
or adult has concerns about child
either on what has been shared or observed.
Pupil is notified that the school will follow up
appropriately on issues raised.
Adult does not investigate but
MUST ACT PROMPTLY.



Adult refers matter to the Designated
Teacher(DT)/Deputy Designated
Teacher(DDT) and then submits a **Note of
Concern.**



DT/DDT consults with
Principal/other relevant staff
to plan course of action,
taking care to avoid undue delay.



**Child Protection Referral is
Required**
DDT/DT seeks consent of
parent/carer and/or child and
contacts Children’s Services
Gateway Team and/or PSNI if
child at immediate risk.
UNOCINI referral form submitted
within 24 hours.

DT/DDT clarifies/discusses concern with
child/parent/carer and decides if a child
protection referral is or is not required.



**Child Protection Referral is
Not Required**
School may consider other
options included monitoring,
signposting or referring case to
appropriate support services
with consent of
parents/carer/child/young
person where appropriate.

Where appropriate the source of the main
concern will be informed as to the action
taken.

The DT/DDT will maintain a written record of
all decisions and actions taken and ensure that
this record is appropriately and securely
stored.

The procedures to be followed are those specified in “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – a Guide for Schools (Apr 2017) which supersedes ‘Pastoral Care in Schools: CHILD PROTECTION (DENI 1997/4)

Clarification of the Role of the Teacher when they have a concern about possible child abuse, or when a concern is brought to their attention

(Based on guidance from *Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – A Guide for Schools* April 2017)

Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the school's ancillary or auxiliary staff sees such signs, he or she should immediately bring them to the attention of either the class teacher or the designated teacher, and it may be appropriate for the necessary clarification to be carried out by the teacher. Such clarification may reassure staff that abuse has not occurred; but signs and symptoms which cause concern, while perhaps not a result of abuse, may nevertheless indicate that the child or his or her family is in need of social services intervention.

Care must be taken in asking, and interpreting children's responses to questions about indications of abuse. The same considerations apply when a child makes an allegation of abuse, or volunteers information which amounts to that. In some cases, talking to the child will crystallise initial concerns into a suspicion that abuse has occurred, and point to the need for an immediate referral. Staff should therefore be aware that the way in which they talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings:

- they should not ask the child leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind;
- they should, therefore, not ask questions which encourage the child to change his or her version of events in any way, or which impose the adult's own assumptions. For example, staff should say, "Tell me what has happened," rather than, "Did they do X to you?"
- the chief task at this stage is to *listen* to the child, and not to interrupt if he or she is freely recalling significant events, and to make a note of the discussion to pass on to the designated teacher. The note should record the time, date, place and people who were present, as well as what was said. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail, or sketched, ***but under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed;***
- any comment by the child, or subsequently by a parent or other adult, about how an injury occurred should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, preferably quoting words actually used;
- staff should ***not*** give the child or young person undertakings of confidentiality, although they can and should, of course, reassure that information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know;
- they should also be aware that their note of the discussion may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings.

While discreet preliminary clarification from the child or his parent or carer will often help to confirm or allay concerns, it is not the responsibility of teachers and other education staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers. They should not take action beyond that recommended in the procedures in the guidance established by Safeguarding and Child

Protection in School (April 2017), Education Authority, The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland and CCMS to be followed in handling suspected cases of abuse, including where a teacher or other member of staff is accused of abuse. These procedures should be familiar to all staff, and easily accessible for reference.

Guidelines for the appropriate behaviour of staff

The entire staff of Saint Catherine's College accepts that they have a serious responsibility for the protection of all pupils and for promoting pupils' welfare. As a school community we are committed to both recognising rights and identifying needs.

The following constitute school policy and will be followed by all members of staff:-

- No member of staff ever arranges to meet a pupil alone in a totally private room or place. The environment should be kept semi-public, by leaving the door ajar or by notifying a colleague that the meeting is taking place.
- Staff are careful not to give undue time or attention to any one young person.
- In extra-curricular activities, staff become involved with groups rather than exclusively with individuals.
- In social activities or field trips involving males and females, pupils are accompanied by both men and women staff and there will always be two adult supervisors on residential activities.
- Staff are respectful of the privacy of pupils in changing rooms, showers and toilets.
- Body searching never happens as it is legally considered to constitute an assault.
- Staff are aware that even in the administration of first-aid, care is taken to avoid anything which might be misconstrued as inappropriate behaviour.

Safeguarding in a digital world

- ❖ Staff are asked to communicate with pupils using their school e mail account or approved educational apps and for school business only
- ❖ Staff must not have any communication with students via social networking websites eg Facebook
- ❖ Photos other than for the purposes of learning and teaching and associated activities should not be taken anywhere on the school site without the permission of the principal.
- ❖ Staff should ensure their own privacy on social networking sites at all times, exercising extreme caution in only communicating with other users of similar private status

Mobile phone communication

- ❖ Staff must not share their mobile/home phone number with any pupil (exceptional circumstances apply)
- ❖ Any messages that staff wish to convey to pupils outside the normal school day must be directed through parents only

Exceptional circumstances:

1. A teacher leading an educational visit off site will use a mobile phone provided by the school. This number will be given to pupils and

parents as a point of contact. In the event of the school mobile's incompatibility with the phone network of the country visited, an alternative contact number will be provided prior to departure.

2. A teacher leading an educational visit will be permitted to have the mobile numbers of those students in his/her care recorded on the school mobile only

Out of Hours contact re: Child Protection has been arranged and key personnel alerted

**DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE
AGAINST A MEMBER OF STAFF**

Key Points

Principal learns of an allegation against a member of staff and informs the Chair/Vice-Chair of BOG as appropriate.



Guidance on the Next Steps

Principal then establishes the facts, seeks advice from the key agencies as appropriate, usually through informal discussion.



Possible Outcomes

Following on from establishing the facts, seeking advice from Key Agencies and discussion with the Chair and/or BOG to agree a way forward from the options below.



Precautionary suspension is not appropriate and the matter is concluded.

Allegation addressed through relevant disciplinary procedures.

Precautionary suspension under Child Protection Procedures imposed.

Alternatives to Precautionary Suspension imposed.

HOW A PARENT CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT

I have a concern about my child's safety



I can talk to the Form Teacher/Year Head



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the DT/DDT for
Child Protection*/ Head of Key Stage/VP for Pastoral
Care



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Principal



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairman
of the Board of Governors



If I am still concerned, I can contact the NI Public
Services Ombudsman.
Tel. no. 0800 343 424



At any time I can talk to the local Children's Services
Gateway Team or the PSNI Central Referral Unit.

***CHILD PROTECTION DESIGNATED TEACHER:
Miss Caitriona McCall**

***DEPUTY DESIGNATED TEACHERS:
Mrs Denise Moore, Mrs Marie McManus,
Mrs Louise McGilly, Mrs Monique Rennie Mrs Edel Mc Kenna**

THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE

All staff teaching and non-teaching have a responsibility to maintain confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people.

The application of reasonable force to restrain or control a student is to be used as a last resort, only when other behavioural management strategies have failed, and when the pupil, other pupils, members of staff, or property are at risk, or the pupil is seriously compromising good order and discipline.

Who may use reasonable force?

Article 4 of the Education (NI) Order 1998 authorises ALL STAFF to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from

- Committing an offence
- Causing personal injury to any person (including him/herself) or damage to property
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

The legislation extends to the premises of the school and when a member of school staff has lawful control or charge of pupils.

What is meant by reasonable force?

Reasonable force is regarded as 'enough force to stop whatever was about to happen from happening'.

- The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it.
- Any force used should always be minimal.
- The degree of force might depend on the age, level of understanding and any physical disability the student may have.

The following physical interventions might be regarded as constituting reasonable force:

- Physically imposing between pupils (intervene with presence, speak in a loud voice, give warning of intervention, intervention if necessary)
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding
- Pushing
- Pulling
- Leading a pupil by the arm
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back or
- (In extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds

REASONABLE FORCE SHOULD ONLY BE USED WHEN OTHER BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES HAVE FAILED.

Recording Incidents Where Reasonable Force Is Used

An up-to-date record of all such incidents should be recorded in an incident report book.

Immediately following any such incident the member of staff involved should

- Tell the Principal
- Provide a short written report to include
 - Name(s) of pupil(s), time and date of incident
 - Names of any witnesses
 - Reason that force was necessary
 - How incident began and progressed – what was said, steps taken to defuse situation, degree of force used, how that force was applied and for how long
 - The pupil's response and outcomes
 - Details of any injury sustained to any person and of any damage to property

Parents should be advised of any such incident. The Principal will need to consider whether this should be done straight away or at the end of the school day, and whether parents should be told orally or in writing.

STAFF TRAINING – CHILD PROTECTION

The school is committed to in-service training for all staff. Each member of staff receives general training in Child Protection and Recording every two years with updates as they emerge. The Designated/Deputy Designated Teachers receive more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All new members of staff in Saint Catherine's College receive Child Protection Training in the September of the incoming year from the Designated Teacher.

SAFEGUARDING TEAM

Members: Mrs N. Tiffney (Principal), Miss C Mc Call (Designated Teacher for Child Protection), Mrs M McManus, Mrs D Moore, Mrs L McGilly and Mrs M Rennie, Mrs E Mc Kenna (Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection),

This core group will have an opportunity to meet on a weekly basis. The full safeguarding team will communicate at least annually regarding Child Protection matters (Mrs T Corr - Governor with Responsibility for CP; Fr McAnenly- Chair of BOG) in addition to the above named members.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

St Catherine's Child Protection Policy and Procedures has been updated in June 2019 and will be continually updated in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary. On-going monitoring and evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

CONTACT ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Duty Social Worker Gateway Team
Southern – (028) 37415285

Armagh Urban & Portadown West
Family Intervention Team
Tel (028) 37564035

Out of Hours – Gateway Team for All Areas
Tel (028) 95049999

Central Referral Unit (CRU)
Part of Public Protection Unit
Tel (028) 90259299

Child Protection Support Service/

Regional helpline Tel (028) 95985590 (9.00am - 5.00pm)

EA Office Ms C. McCann / Ms J. McCann
Tel (028) 38341975

NI Childline
PO Box 1111
Belfast
Bt1 7DZ
Tel (028) 92327772

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline
24 Hours Call Free
Tel 0800 800 500