



SCHOOL POLICY ON CHILD PROTECTION

The school recognises that all its staff have a responsibility to help protect its pupils from abuse or the risk of abuse. In light of this the Principal will

1. Ensure that all staff (teaching and non-teaching) have guidelines indicating
 - a. code of conduct for all staff.
 - b. the different possible categories of abuse.
 - c. the possible symptoms of abuse.
 - d. how to investigate and report on abuse.
 - e. procedures to be followed when necessary.
 - f. the role of the designated teacher (and deputy).
 - g. reporting procedures.
2. Designate a senior member of staff (the designated teacher) or deputy available in the absence of the designated teacher, who will have the primary immediate responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
3. Ensure that appropriate records of reports, interviews, reviews etc. are kept, including the information on the Child Protection Register.
4. Ensure that both the designated teacher and her deputy are properly trained to carry out their responsibilities.
5. Ensure that child protection issues are part of the induction programme for all newly appointed members of staff.
6. Ensure that appropriate in-service training for staff is organised.
7. Ensure that the progress of a child placed on the Child Protection Register is monitored.
8. Ensure that an appropriate self-protection programme for pupils is included in the curriculum.
9. Ensure that pupils, through appropriate notices placed around the school, are aware of how to obtain help and from whom.
10. Inform all who need to know of the complaints procedure.
11. Arrange for a criminal record check to be carried out on new employees.

12. Ensure where a referral has been deemed necessary that Social Services and/or the Police and the designated officer for child protection in the appropriate Education & Library Board are notified immediately.
13. Ensure that parents are made aware through the school prospectus, parents' meetings or other appropriate methods, of the school's child protection arrangements and the fact that these may require cases to be referred to the investigative agencies.

CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

One recognised working definition of the term 'Child abuse' is:

'Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer (i.e. a person who has actual custody of a child such as a foster parent or staff member in a residential home), 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 to provide proper care, or both. The abuse may take a number of forms, including:

- **neglect:** the actual or likely* persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or 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;
- **physical injury:** actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child;
- **sexual abuse:** actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. 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.**
- **emotional abuse:** actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This is where it is the main or only form of abuse.
- domestic violence within the home
- self harm
- suicide: thoughts, plans and actions

These types of abuse apply equally to children with disabilities but the abuse may take slightly different forms, for example, lack of supervision, or the use of physical restraints such as being confined to a wheelchair or bed.

- * 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 to 'potential' or 'suspected', i.e. that the teacher believes that the abuse probably happened, or will probably happen.
- ** We are advised that "sexual activity involving a child who has achieved sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his or own mind on the matter, while illegal, may not necessarily constitute sexual abuse. One example which could fall into this category is a sexual relationship between a 16 year old girl and an 18 year old boy. The decision to initiate child protection action in such cases is a matter for professional judgement and each case will be considered individually. The criminal aspects of the case will, of course, be dealt with by the Police."

IDENTIFYING ABUSE

It is always preferable to prevent abuse, or for intervention to take place at the earliest possible stage. Because of their day-to-day contact with individual children, school staff, especially teachers but also non-teaching staff, including lunch-time supervisors and ancillary or auxiliary 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 other causes, including bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances, or drug, alcohol or solvent misuse. Sometimes, however, they may be due to child abuse. For example:

- bruises, particularly bruises 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, particularly when children change their clothes for physical education, swimming and other sports activities, or when very young children or children with special education needs are helped with toileting;
- possible indicators of physical neglect, such as inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparently deficient nutrition and of emotional abuse, such as excessive dependence or attention-seeking, may be noticeable;
- sexual abuse may exhibit physical signs, or lead to a substantial behavioural change including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

No list of symptoms can be exhaustive. Also, it must always be remembered that alternative medical, psychological or social explanations may exist for the signs and symptoms described above.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

The school recognises that all its staff have a responsibility to help protect its pupils from abuse or the risk of abuse. (The term abuse includes physical injury, neglect, continued ill-treatment, emotional and sexual abuse).

In the event of any member of staff receiving or uncovering information, no matter how trivial or uncorroborated about actual or suspected child abuse, the procedure will be as follows:

- The member of staff shall immediately inform the designated teacher, Mrs L Stewart, or in her absence the deputy designated teacher. The designated teacher will then inform the Principal.
- The designated teacher or deputy designated teacher will telephone the Gateway Team at Stewartstown Road Health Centre within the space of one working day.
- The designated teacher or deputy designated teacher will complete a UNOCINI form and send copies to the appropriate agency, SEELB and retain a copy in the school files.

Any teacher or other member of staff who complies with the school's procedure in making a report of suspected child abuse is acting within the course of his/her employment and in such circumstances where he/she has acted in good faith, will receive the full support of the Board of Governors and will not be legally or financially liable.

The responsibility of the designated teacher/deputy designated teacher is as follows:

- to ensure that the member of staff completes an appropriate report using form WHSCP1 and that a written report (WHSCP2) is completed for school records
- to notify the local Social Services Department (via the Gateway Team) and, where an arrestable offence is suspected, the police and the designated officer for child protection in the South Eastern Education and Library Board
- to complete the UNOCINI form for Social Services
- to liaise with the appropriate Head of Year if this is thought to be beneficial
- to keep suitable records of reports, interviews, reviews, etc.
- to liaise with Social Services as necessary.
- to ensure that the appropriate Heads of Year are made aware of "Looked After" children or those on the Child Protection Register

Designated Teacher - Mrs L Stewart
Deputy Teachers - Mr A Craig
- Mrs H Millen
- Mrs C Latham (Preparatory Department)

COMPLAINTS FROM PARENTS

Any parent wishing to complain should contact the designated teacher, deputy designated teacher or if this is not appropriate the Chairman of the Board of

Governors.

INVESTIGATING AND REPORTING ON ABUSE

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 Head of Year 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 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 recalling significant events and to make notes 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 the child's clothing be removed.
- any comment by the child, or subsequently by a parent or carer or other adult, about how an injury occurred should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, preferably quoting the actual words 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 notes 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 policy to be followed in handling cases of abuse, including where a teacher or other member of staff is accused of abuse.

Code of Conduct for Wallace High School Employees

INTRODUCTION

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interest of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be aware of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the pupils in the school must be above reproach. The code of conduct is intended to assist staff by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Private Meeting with Pupils

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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 it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- (c) Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

2. Physical Contact with Pupils

- (a) As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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).

- (d) Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- (e) 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.
- (f) Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- (g) 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 - in the case of teaching staff to a V.P. and in the case of non-teaching staff to the Bursar. Should a V.P. or the Bursar be in such a situation he/she should submit his/her report to the Principal.
- (h) Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting or in approved out of school 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.

3. Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- (a) Teachers should avoid any teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted.
- (b) 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.
- (c) If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

4. Relationships and Attitudes

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.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature the teacher should be aware that they or the materials may be criticised after the materials have been used.

CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER

If the Social Services inform the school that the child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, the school will monitor the progress of the child. The school will alert either the child's case co-ordinator from Social Services or the Education Welfare Officer when a child on the Child Protection Register is absent for more than a few days, or on a regular basis, or shows any signs which suggest a deterioration in the child's home circumstances.

Child Protection Conferences

When a referral has been made to Social Services of a case of suspected or alleged abuse, a member of staff, either the designated teacher or her deputy or the Head of Year, may be asked to contribute the school's knowledge of the child to the Child Protection Conference convened by Social Services to assess the child's circumstances and decide on further action.

Reports, will be made using the UNOCINI form.