



**ST. PATRICK'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
ARMAGH**

Child Protection Policy

Reviewed September 2007

SECTION ONE

FOREWORD

THIS DOCUMENT SETS OUT:

- ◆ The principles and overall objectives of child protection in St. Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh
- ◆ The Procedures that are to be followed by all staff.
- ◆ A framework for the promotion of high standards of practice in child protection based on a commitment to a multi-disciplinary approach. This is intended to ensure that no member of staff at St. Patrick's Grammar School is left isolated or allowed to act unilaterally.

SECTION TWO

PRINCIPLES

- ◆ The well-being of pupils is our paramount consideration.
- ◆ Procedures must be followed to ensure prompt and effective help to pupils who may be at risk of abuse.
- ◆ Those concerned in cases of child abuse should be treated with respect and accorded full civil and legal rights.
- ◆ Children and their families should be made aware of the information-sharing process.
- ◆ Child protection plans and practice should flow from careful and thorough multi-disciplinary assessment.
- ◆ Pupils, their parents and the school are entitled to be involved in decision making.

SECTION THREE

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To establish, maintain and review child abuse procedures.
- ◆ To establish and review role of designated teachers.
- ◆ To identify and promote the development of a staff training strategy.
- ◆ To ensure that parents / guardians are aware of our:
 - ◆ Child Abuse Policy
 - ◆ Structures and Procedures
- ◆ To establish and develop child protection issues in the school curriculum.

SECTION FOUR

CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE

(AS DEFINED IN DENI CIRCULAR: “PASTORAL CARE IN SCHOOLS:
CHILD PROTECTION” 1999)

A child is defined as anyone under the age of eighteen years.

- ◆ **NEGLECT:** The actual or likely ¹ 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 ²;
- ◆ **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.

ALL STAFF need to know how to identify the signs and symptoms of possible abuse. Further information and guidance on the recognition of abuse is contained in Section 5 of the file “Child Protection” issued by the Southern Area Child Protection Committee, (S.A.C.P.C.), which together with a copy of D.E.N.I. Circular 1999, are available to teachers and the auxiliary staff in the main office.

¹ 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. The terms ‘confirmed’, ‘potential’, and ‘suspected’ are taken from the Joint Protocol established by the Police and social services.

² “ Co-operating to Protect Children” and the Joint Protocol both advise that “ sexual activity involving a child who has achieved sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his or her own mind on the matter, **while illegal**, may not necessarily constitute sexual abuse as defined for the purposes of [this guide and the Protocol]. The decision to initiate child protection action in such cases is a matter for professional judgement and each case should be considered individually. The criminal aspects of the case will, of course, be dealt with by the Police”

SECTION FIVE

THE REPORTING PROCEDURES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

- 1) The Designated Teacher with special responsibility for dealing with cases of suspected child abuse is **Mr Frank Corvan**, Vice-Principal. In his absence, the designated teacher is **Miss Lisa McMahon**, teacher in charge of Personal, Social and Health Education.
- 2) Members of staff who have been informed of the abuse of a child or who suspect that a child is being abused should inform the Designated Teacher, or his deputy. In the absence of both, the Headmaster should be informed directly.
- 3) The Designated Teacher will immediately notify the Headmaster.
- 4) If the Designated Teacher, in consultation with the Headmaster, decides that there is reason for concern, he will immediately contact the Senior Social Worker at the appropriate Health and Social Services Unit of Management i.e. the location which covers the area in which the student resides (S.A.C.P.C. File Appendix A). The referral will be confirmed in writing on a School Referral Form ACPCT.
- 5) The Designated Teacher will then inform the, S.E.L.B. , Chief Education Welfare Officer, who is the Board's Designated Officer for dealing with cases of child abuse, of the action that has been taken. The Board Officer will also be sent a copy of the ACPCT form in an envelope marked "CONFIDENTIAL".
- 6) The Headmaster will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

- 7) Where the suspected abuse is discovered by an Education Welfare Officer or an Educational Psychologist, he or she will inform the Designated Teacher or Headmaster and The Board Officer. Social Services will be informed in such an instance by The Board Officer.
- 8) All records pertaining to child protection will be lodged in a central file under the control and care of the Designated Teacher.

NOTES:

The school's pastoral care ethos places the student at the centre of the school's work, and promotes the valuing and respecting of students and staff as individuals. It also promotes good communication through which staff (especially teaching staff) are encouraged to listen carefully to students, engendering trust through their approachability. It is hoped this ethos will give abused children the confidence to seek help from members of staff. In addition, the school pastoral care structure via form teachers and year heads and the counselling service provide tried and trusted avenues for communication.

A) WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD TELLS YOU OF ABUSE

- ◆ Listen carefully to what the child says.
- ◆ Accept what is said.
- ◆ Take notes.
- ◆ React calmly without displaying shock or disbelief. Over-reaction can frighten the child and compound feeling of guilt.
- ◆ Reassure the child and tell him he is not to blame. Children can often feel guilty. Remember they are the victims - never the cause!
- ◆ Don't give false reassurance e.g. "Don't worry, everything will be alright now."
- ◆ Use the words the child uses. If the child is aware that you are reluctant to use particular words he may be reluctant to use the words or may not speak at all.
- ◆ Do not promise confidentiality.
- ◆ Do not ask leading questions e.g. "Did she hit you there?" or "Did he touch your private parts?" This approach may invalidate evidence, in court, at a later date.
- ◆ Remember it is not your responsibility to investigate the child abuse. That is for Social Services to manage.
- ◆ It may be necessary though, to ask questions. You can prompt the child in a neutral way, with open-ended questions such as, "Can you say anything more about that?"
- ◆ Control your feelings towards the perpetrator, and do not criticise him/her. The child may love the perpetrator and reconciliation may be possible.
- ◆ Check out your understanding of what has happened with the child if you are not clear what is being disclosed to you.

- ◆ Write up your notes as soon as possible and retain these. Make sure you record time, date, location, exactly what the child said, non-verbal behaviour. Note, too, any injuries, bruises etc. Note, as well, when you referred your suspicions.
- ◆ Explain what you have to do next and that you have to refer to the Designated Teacher.
- ◆ Safeguard everyone's interests by following the Child Abuse Procedures (Consult as appropriate).
- ◆ Refer to the Designated Teacher.
- ◆ Be available to support the child in any ongoing process.
- ◆ It takes courage and determination for a child to tell an adult that they are being, or have been abused. Children may be frightened by the threat of violence to themselves, or other members of their family, or of being taken away from, or breaking up the family. Some children never disclose abuse and, as a result suffer throughout their childhood, and, sometimes, for the rest of their lives.
- ◆ Consequently, when children confide in someone, such as anyone of you in this school, it is usually a person they trust and with whom they feel safe.
- ◆ Seek support for yourself. Listening to children talk about their experience of being abused can be very upsetting. That in turn can affect the help you give. It is important to understand these feelings so that they do not cloud professional judgement. In these circumstances, you should have easy access to support structures. Within this context it is likely you will be encouraged not to talk about the facts of the case but, rather, how you feel about the facts.

B) SUSPECTED ABUSE BY A MEMBER OF STAFF

- ◆ When the suspected abuse involves a member of the school staff other than the Designated Teacher or the Headmaster, then Step 2 of the Procedure should be followed.
- ◆ When the suspected abuse involves the Designated Teacher, the Headmaster must be informed. The Headmaster will be inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors. If the Headmaster, in consultation with the Chairman, decides that there is reason for concern he will inform the Senior Social Worker (Step 4) and the Chief Education Officer (Step 5).
- ◆ When the suspected abuse involves the Headmaster, the Designated Teacher must be informed. The latter will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors. If the Chairman, in consultation with the Designated Teacher, decides that there is reason for concern, the Chairman will follow Steps 4 and 5.
- ◆ In arriving at decisions in relation to complaints against a member of staff, the Headmaster and/or Chairman of the Board of Governors , and/or the Designated Teacher will carry out preliminary enquiries based on the following principals:
 - ◆ The welfare of the pupil concerned and that of the other pupils will be of paramount importance.
 - ◆ Procedures will maintain the efficient running of the school.
 - ◆ The rights of the individual against whom the complaint has been made will be upheld.
 - ◆ The enquiries will be carried out with an open and objective mind.
 - ◆ Subsequent procedures for investigating and dealing with complaints will be consistent with the school's staff disciplinary procedure.
 - ◆ The complainant in a case involving a member of staff will be kept informed by the Headmaster or Chairman of the Board of Governors of the progress and outcome of the investigations.
 - ◆ If, following verification of a complaint of gross misconduct, a teacher is dismissed the Headmaster (or Chairman of the Board of Governors if the Headmaster is the dismissed teacher) will inform the Department of Education to facilitate continued recognition as a teacher to be considered.

SECTION SIX

CURRICULUM ISSUES

Given that overt treatment of the issue of child abuse may create undue anxiety, particularly in younger students, St. Patrick's has promoted awareness of the issue to students via:

- ◆ Religious Education class emphasising topics such as Family, Relationships, Personal Identity, Children's Rights, Assertiveness and Feelings. Religious Education classes are compulsory at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, and for Advanced Level Students.
- ◆ A once-weekly class in form class period taken by the Form Teacher for all Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Sixth Form students.
- ◆ The carefully planned and co-ordinated cross-curricular sex education programme delivered in association with "Love for Life" for Key Stage 3 which is consistent with Department of Education and Catholic Church guidelines.
- ◆ The integration of Personal Safety programmes into the school curriculum.
- ◆ These programmes are co-ordinated by the teacher with responsibility for Personal, Social and Health Education, Miss Lisa McMahon.

SECTION SEVEN

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

TO DATE, STAFF DEVELOPMENT HAS CENTRED ON:

- ◆ Communication of the identity of the Designated Teachers;
- ◆ Appropriate Designated Teacher Training (1997/98, 1998/9, 2003 & 2005);
- ◆ On-going internal and external Pastoral Care Team Training for all Year Heads and Form Teachers;
- ◆ Availability in the general office of the Southern Area Child Protection Committee File on “Child Protection” and D.E.N.I. Circular (1999) on ‘Child Protection.’;
- ◆ Board of Governors / All Staff I.N.S.E.T. training day on Child Protection via S.E.L.B;
- ◆ Staff development for new staff as they are recruited.

APPENDIX 1:

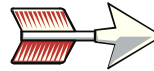
PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE

Child makes a disclosure to a staff member or staff member has concerns either as a result of one observation or many observations over a period of time. Staff member does **NOT** investigate.

ACT PROMPLTY!



Staff member refers matter to Designated Teacher, discusses with Designated Teacher who makes full notes.



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

- SELB Designated Officer;
- Social Services;

When seeking advice you do not have to give any names. You are making an enquiry.



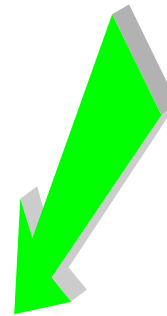
Designated Teacher meets with principal (in case of principal's absence, vice-principal) to plan course of action and ensures that a written record is made.



Principal/Designated Teacher makes referral to:

- Social Services and Care Unit
- Copies of pro-forma to SELB
- Designated Officer

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



Other Action:

- Record advice given;
- Monitor
- Review



Headmaster will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

APPENDIX 2:

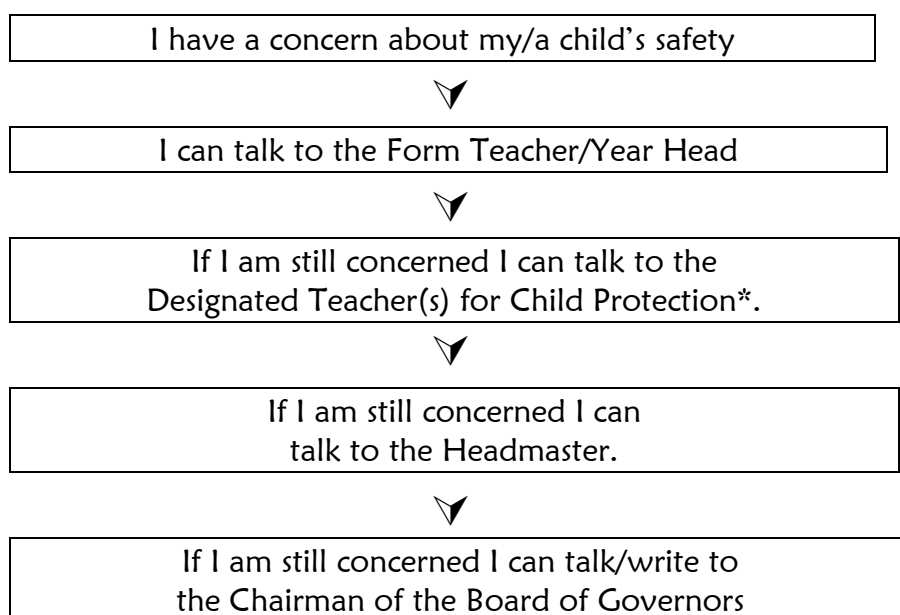
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN ST. PATRICK'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The school's pastoral care ethos places the child at the centre of the school's work, and promotes the valuing of children as individuals. It also promotes good communication through which staff listen carefully to students, engendering trust through their approachability. In addition, the school pastoral care structure via form teacher and year heads and the counselling service provide tried and trusted avenues for communication.

In all their contact with pupils, staff in St. Patrick's follow the guidelines and procedures outlined in the Department of Education publication, 'Pastoral Care in Schools - Child Protection' (1999). In a case of suspected child abuse, the action taken will be carried out in partnership with the professional agencies. The school will not be involved in investigating the suspected abuse.

The school's Child Protection Policy is available for consultation at the School Reception (Tel: 028 3752 2018).

HOW A PARENT CAN DISCUSS A CONCERN WITH THE SCHOOL



* Child Protection Designated Teacher: **Mr Frank Corvan**

* Deputy Designated teacher: **Miss McMahon**

At any time I can talk to the:
Social Worker: ☎ 028 3752 2262
PSNI Care Unit: ☎ 028 3831 5274

APPENDIX 3:

GUIDANCE SHEET ISSUED TO ALL STAFF AT IN-SERVICE TRAINING ON NOVEMBER 2 1998

CHILD PROTECTION

DESIGNATED TEACHERS:

MR F. CORVAN & MISS L. MCMAHON

GUIDELINES FOR THE PRUDENT CONDUCT OF STAFF.

The entire staff of St. Patrick's Grammar School takes seriously the duty to care for young people and at all times they exercise prudence in responding to their needs. They avoid any conduct which could be misconstrued as compromising behaviour.

THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES HAVE BEEN FOUND OF PRACTICAL HELP IN THIS REGARD:

Staff never meet alone with a young person in a totally private room or place. Prudence dictates that the environment be kept semi-public as for instance, by leaving the door ajar or by notifying a colleague that the meeting is taking place.

- ◆ In extra curricular activities, staff become involved with groups rather than exclusively with individuals.
- ◆ Staff are careful not to give undue time or attention to any young person.
- ◆ In social activities involving males and females they are accompanied by both men and women staff.
- ◆ Staff are respectful of the privacy of the young people in changing rooms, showers and toilets.
- ◆ In cases of travel involving a residential stay, there is a minimum of two adult supervisors.
- ◆ Body searching even in cases of alleged theft is legally considered as 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.

STAFF CAN HELP IN THE PREVENTION AND DETECTION OF CHILD ABUSE BY:

- ◆ Promoting an atmosphere of trust where victims can disclose their secret and lessen their feelings of isolation.
- ◆ Implementing preventative programmes which educate about interpersonal relationships and normative behaviour.
- ◆ Giving appropriate information on the topic of child abuse.
- ◆ Educating on the legal responsibilities to report any suspected form of child abuse.
- ◆ Treating victims and their families with sensitivity and respect.