



RBAI Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Contents

1.	Our School's Child protection ethos	Page 2
2.	Related Policies	Page 2
3.	The School's Safeguarding Team	Page 3
4.	Roles & Responsibilities	Page 4
5.	Definitions of Harm	Page 7
6.	Responding to a Safeguarding Concern	Page 10
7.	Consent	Page 11
8.	Confidentiality, Information Sharing and Record Keeping	Page 12
9.	Safe Recruitment Procedures	Page 13
10.	Code of Conduct	Page 13
11.	The Preventative Curriculum	Page 13
12.	Operation Encompass	Page 14
13.	Monitoring and Evaluation	Page 15
14.	Appendices:	Page 16
Appendix 1:	Specific Types of Abuse	Page 16
Appendix 2:	Children with Increased Vulnerabilities	Page 21
Appendix 3:	How a Parent Can Raise a concern	Page 23
Appendix 4:	Procedure Where the School Has Concerns about Possible Abuse by someone other than a Member of Staff	Page 25
Appendix 5:	Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff	Page 26
Appendix 6:	Note of Concern	Page 27
Appendix 7:	Recognising Abuse	Page 29
Appendix 8:	Safeguarding Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers	Page 31
Appendix 9:	DENI Circulars	Page 34
Appendix 10:	Useful safeguarding contact details (CPSS, Gateway, PSNI)	Page 36
Appendix 11:	Glossary	Page 37
Appendix 12:	Safeguarding Summary for pupils	Page 38

Child Protection Ethos

We in **RBAI** have a responsibility for the safeguarding and child protection of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and support staff should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or harm to a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school.

Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, “Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland” (DHSSPSNI, 2017 and 2024), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools”, (DENI Circular 2017/04 and subsequent amendments) and the Safeguarding Board for NI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

The following Principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy:

- the child or young person’s welfare is paramount;
- the voice of the child or young person should be respected and their views considered;
- parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together;
- partnership;
- age appropriate preventative education;
- responses should be proportionate to the circumstances;
- protection; and
- evidence based and informed decision making.

Other Related Policies

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. The child protection policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Positive Behaviour & Discipline Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data protection Policy
- Trips and Tours Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Administration of Medication Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Special Educational Needs Inclusion Policy

- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing to have a copy should contact the School office or visit the school website at www.rbai.org.uk

School Safeguarding Team

As best practice, in the best interests of the children, and as a support for the Designated Teachers, RBAI has a Safeguarding Team which comprises:

- Chair of the Board of Governors (Mr M Howard)
- Designated Governor for Child Protection (Mr S Gowdy)
- Principal (Dr C Walker)
- Designated Teachers (Vice Principal – Mrs J Muise)
- Deputy Designated Teachers
 - Mr J Peak
 - Mr S McMullan
 - Mrs K Parks

Although child protection concerns about any pupil can be reported to any of the teachers in the Safeguarding team, responsibility for child protection will be divided across the key stages as follows:

- Mrs J Muise – overall responsibility
- Mrs K Parks - responsibility for Key Stage 3
- Mr S McMullan - responsibility for Key Stage 4
- Mr J Peak - responsibility for Key Stage 5

The team may co-opt other members as required to help address specific issues, for example the SENCO, ICT Co-ordinator and RSE Coordinator.

This Safeguarding Team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the school. The EA CPSS provides Child Protection training in relation to the specific responsibilities of each member of the team.

The responsibilities of the team includes:

- The monitoring and periodic review of Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements in the school.
- Support for the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities, including recognition of the administrative and emotional demands of the posts.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Board of Governors must ensure that:

- A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- A Designated Teacher (DT) and Deputy Designated Teacher (DDT) are appointed in the school.
- They have a full understanding of the roles of the DT and DDTs.
- Safeguarding and Child Protection training is given to all staff and governors including refresher training.
- Relevant safeguarding information and guidance is disseminated to all staff and governors with the opportunity to discuss requirements and impact on roles and responsibilities.
- The school has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually by the Board of Governors, and parents and pupils receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy and complaints procedure every two years.
- The school has an Anti-Bullying Policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying. See the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.
- The school ensures that other safeguarding policies, (see pages 2 & 3), are reviewed at least every three years, or as specified in relevant guidance.
- There is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school.
- All school staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted, in line with DE Circulars.
- It receives a full annual report on all child protection matters, and there is a report to each meeting of the School Committee of any child protection issues which have arisen since its previous meeting. This report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the school, including training for staff.
- The school maintains the following child protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff and 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools:
 - Safeguarding and child protection concerns.
 - Disclosures of abuse.
 - Allegations against staff and actions taken to investigate and deal with outcomes.
 - Staff induction and training.

2. Chair of Board of Governors:

- Has a pivotal role in creating and maintaining a safeguarding ethos.
- Receives training from CPSS and HR.
- Assumes lead responsibility in the event of a CP complaint or concern about the Principal.
- Ensures compliance with legislation, Child Protection record keeping and policies, including signing and dating annually the Record of Child Abuse complaints against staff members even if there have been no entries.

3. Designated Governor for Child Protection

Advises the Board of Governors on:

- The role of the Designated Teachers.
- The content of Child Protection policies.
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school.

- The content of the updates given to the School Committee and full Annual Designated Teacher's Report.
- Recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff.

4. Principal

- Assists the Board of Governors in fulfilling its Safeguarding and Child Protection duties.
- Ensures the Board of Governors is kept fully informed of all developments relating to Safeguarding including changes to legislation, policy, procedures, DE circulars, inclusion of Child Protection and Safeguarding on the agendas of all meetings of the School Committee.
- Manages allegations/complaints against school staff.
- Establishes and manages the operational systems for Safeguarding and Child Protection;
- Appoints and manages DT/DDTs who are enabled to fulfil their Safeguarding responsibilities.
- Ensures safe and effective recruitment and selection including awareness of safeguarding and child protection for new staff and volunteers.
- Ensures that parents and pupils receive a copy or summary of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy at intake and at a minimum every 2 years.
- Maintains the school's record of Child abuse complaints.

5. Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher

Every school is required to appoint a Designated Teacher (DT) with responsibility for Child Protection. They must also appoint a Deputy Designated Teacher (DDT) who as a member of the Safeguarding team will actively support the Designated Teacher in carrying out the following duties:

- The induction and training of all school staff including support staff (before they commence their role).
- Being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff.
- Responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns.
- Maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services e.g. Family Support Hubs.
- Making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where appropriate.
- Liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection.
- Keeping the school Principal informed.
- The DT has lead responsibility for the development of the school's Child Protection Policy.
- Promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school.
- The DT compiles written reports to the Board of Governors regarding Child Protection.

6. Other members of school staff (including teaching and support staff)

- Members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures initially to the DT for Child Protection or to one of the DDTs if she is not available.
- Class teachers and Housemasters should complete the Note of Concern (see Appendix 6) if there are safeguarding concerns such as: poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse.
- **Staff should not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, should not investigate nor should they ask leading questions.

- **The designation of a teacher for Child Protection does not diminish the role of other staff in being alert to signs of abuse and being aware of the procedures to be followed.**

SUMMARY

If a pupil discloses that he has been abused:

1. **RECEIVE** Stay calm, listen, take notes.
2. **REASSURE** *'You have done the right thing by coming to me'*. Reassure the child that you have listened and hear what they are saying but don't make promises about what you can do.
3. **RESPOND** Tell the pupils what you are going to do and then do it. Do not ask leading questions, do not criticise the perpetrator.
4. **REPORT** Following the school guidelines, report without delay to the DT/DDT/Principal. Do **not** ask the pupil to repeat the disclosure to another member of staff.
5. **RECORD** State facts, not opinions. Write notes, record the date, time and place, also the behaviour and words of the pupil. If appropriate, draw a diagram of any markings.
6. **RESPECT** The child and their family and their right to a non-judgemental confidential response.

RECORDING NOTES

Notes should be factual and in neutral language. They should record the issues that were discussed or the concerns that were raised, the options that were suggested and the future action to be taken. Notes should be made during the session, or as soon after the session as possible. The recording of notes is important for the protection of the note taker.

Conducting interviews

- Care should be taken especially if there is concern about possible abuse.
- Avoid leading questions such as *'Did X hit you?'* or *'Did they do X to you?'* This could be interpreted as putting ideas into the pupil's mind.
- Listen to the pupil rather than leading the discussion. Use reflective questions if they are helpful: *'How did you feel about that?'* *'What did he/she do next?'*
- Keep careful notes of what is said and record any signs of injury.
- Remember that it is not the staff's responsibility to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse or to make any enquiries of the pupil, of other pupils, of other staff or of parents etc.

7. Parents

The primary responsibility for safeguarding and protection of children rests with parents who should feel confident about raising any concerns they have in relation to their child.

It is the responsibility of parents to play their part in safeguarding by informing the school:

- If the child has a medical condition or educational need.
- If there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child.
- If there is any change in a child's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility. **It is essential that the school has up to date contact details for the parent/carers.**

- If there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school.
- If their child is absent, they should inform the school on the morning of the absence and should follow up by sending in a note on the child's return to school. This assures the school that the parent/carer knows about the absence. More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection
- RBAI is registered with the **Safer Schools NI App**. Parents are expected to register to ensure they are up to date with the most recent safety information.
- See Appendix 3 for a flow chart summarising how a parent/carer can raise a concern about child protection

CHILD PROTECTION DEFINITIONS

Definition of Harm

Harm means the ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development. It 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 the 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.

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm.

Harm can be caused by:

Neglect

Physical abuse

Sexual abuse

Emotional abuse

Exploitation

Neglect is 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.

Physical Abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

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.

Emotional Abuse is 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 opportunity to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

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

Although 'exploitation' is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR categories as children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse.

Signs and symptoms of abuse:

SIGNS OF ABUSE include:

Markings	Bruises, lacerations, bite marks, burns – refusal to discuss such injuries, fear of parents being contacted, flinching at sudden movements, fear of medical help.
Neglect	Inadequate clothing, poor personal hygiene, poor growth, constant hunger, frequent lateness or non-attendance, untreated medical conditions, low self-esteem, no social relationships, neurotic behaviour e.g. rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking.
Emotional	Excessive dependence, attention seeking, self-mutilation, sudden speech disorders, fear of new situations.
Sexual	Physical signs, inappropriate sexual behaviour.

No list of symptoms can be exhaustive. Also, the signs described may have alternative medical, psychological or social explanations.

See also Appendix 7

Specific types of Abuse

In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse that we in **RBAI** are aware of and have therefore included them in our policy. Please see these in **Appendix 1.**

Children with Increased Vulnerabilities

Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English and sexual orientation. We have included information about children with increased vulnerabilities in our policy. Please see these in **Appendix 2**.

Adult Safeguarding

An '**Adult at risk of harm**' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics and/or
- b) Life circumstances

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An '**Adult in need of protection**' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics and/or
- b) Life circumstances and
- c) Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests;
and
- d) Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

See **Appendix 2** for further information.

Responding to Safeguarding and Child Protection Concerns

Safeguarding is more than child protection. Safeguarding begins with promotion and preventative activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection. Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm¹.

How a Parent can Raise a Concern

In **RBAI** we aim to work closely with parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of their child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner.

If a parent has a concern, they can talk to the Form Tutor/Housemaster the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection, the Pastoral Vice Principal or the Principal.

If they are still concerned, they may talk to the Convener of the School Committee or the Chairman of the Board of Governors. If after this a parent still has concerns, they can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman.

At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Central Referral Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in **Appendix 3**.

Where School has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff

In **RBAI** if a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, the member of staff will complete a *Note of Concern* (see **Appendix 6**) and act promptly. **They will not investigate** - this is a matter for Social Services - but will discuss these concerns with the Designated Teacher or with the Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available.

The DT/DDT will consult with the Principal, or other relevant staff always taking care to avoid undue delay. **If the Principal is not available, the DDT should consult with the DT or other Vice-Principal.** If required, advice may be sought from an Education Authority Child Protection Officer. The DT/DDT may also seek clarification from the child or young person, their parent/carer.

If a child protection referral is not required the school may consider other options including monitoring, signposting or referring to other support agencies e.g. Family Support Hub with parental consent and, where appropriate, with the child/young person's consent.

¹ Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (August 2017)
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

If a child protection referral is required, the DT/DDT will seek consent from the parent/carer and/or the child {if they are competent to give this} unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm.

The DT/DDT will phone the Gateway team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI referral form. Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed of the action taken.

For further detail please see [Appendix 4](#).

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

When a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff the Principal (or the DT if the Principal is not available) must be informed immediately. If the complaint is against the Principal, then the DT should be informed and she will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority. The procedure as outlined in [Appendix 5](#) will be followed.

Consent

Concerns about the safety or welfare of a child/young person, should, where practicable, be discussed with the parent and consent sought for a referral to children's social services in the local HSC Trust, unless seeking agreement is likely to place the child/young person at further risk through delay or undermine any criminal investigative process (for example in circumstances where there are concerns or suspicions that a crime has taken place); or there is concern raised about the parent's actions or reactions. The communication/language needs of the parents/carers should be established for example in relation to disability/ethnicity and the parent's/carer's capacity to understand should be ascertained. These should be addressed through the provision of appropriate communication methods, including, where necessary, translators, signers, intermediaries, or advocacy services.

Effective protection for children/young people may, on occasions, require the sharing of information without prior parental/carer consent in advance of that information being shared.

Where staff decide not to seek parental consent before making a referral to children's social services in the local Health and Social Care Trust or the police, the reason for this decision must be clearly noted in the child/young person's records and included within the verbal and written/UNOCINI referral. A non-urgent referral, i.e. a child in need/family support referrals **must** have the consent of the parents/carers and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) and should be made in writing using the UNOCINI referral form.

When a referral is deemed to be necessary in the interests of the child/young person, and the parents/carers have been consulted and do not consent, the following action should be taken:

- the reason for proceeding without parental consent must be recorded;
- the withholding of permission by the parent/carer must be included in the verbal and written referral to children's Social Services;
- the parent/carer should be contacted to inform them that, after considering their wishes, a referral has been made.

Staff making a referral may ask for their anonymity to be protected as far as possible because of a genuine threat to self/family. In such instances this anonymity should be protected with an explanation to the staff member that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as information may become the subject of court processes.

There is a difficult balance between gaining consent for a referral into Adult Protection Gateway and also ensuring a vulnerable adult is protected from harm. Consent will always be sought from the person for a referral to statutory agencies.

If consent is withheld, then a referral will not be made into the Adult Protection Gateway unless there is reasonable doubt regarding the capacity of the adult to give/withhold consent. In this case contact will be made with the local Adult Protection Gateway to seek further advice.

In situations where there is reasonable doubt regarding an individual's capacity, they will be informed of the referral, unless to do so would put them at any further risk.

The principle of consent may be overridden if there is an overriding public interest, for example in the following circumstances:

- the person causing the harm is a member of staff, a volunteer or someone who only has contact with the adult at risk because they both use the service; or
- consent has been provided under undue influence, coercion or duress.
- other people are at risk from the person causing harm.
- or a crime is alleged or suspected.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

Where there have been, or are current, Child Protection concerns about a pupil who transfers to another school we will consider what information should be shared with the DT in the receiving school.

Where it is necessary to safeguard children, information will be shared with other statutory agencies in accordance with the requirements of this policy, the school data protection policy and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

If a pupil from our school attends an EOTAS provision, a member of the safeguarding team will share any child protection concerns they have with the DT in the centre. If child protection concerns arise when the pupil is attending an EOTAS provision the DT in EOTAS will follow child protection procedures and will advise a member of the school's safeguarding team of the concerns and any actions taken. It is the responsibility of EOTAS staff to maintain their records in accordance with DE Circular 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools and any subsequent updates.

Record Keeping

In accordance with DE guidance (2020/07 Child Protection: Record keeping in schools) RBAI has developed clear guidelines for the recording, storage, retention and destruction of both manual and electronic records where they relate to child protection concerns.

In order to meet these requirements all child protection records, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in our School RBAI are stored securely and only the DT/DDTs, Principal and Chairman of the Board of Governors have access to them. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from child's date of birth plus 30 years. If information is held electronically, whether on a laptop or on a portable memory device, all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected. Staff should not email concerns regarding child protection and should fill in the *note of concern*.

These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

Safe Recruitment Procedures

Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals' access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system and schools must ensure that all persons on school property are vetted, inducted and supervised as appropriate. All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in RBAI are vetted / supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

Code of Conduct For all Staff - Paid or Unpaid

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the child and young people in their charge must be above reproach. All members of staff are expected to comply with the school's Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers which has been approved by the Board of Governors (See Appendix 8).

The Preventative Curriculum

The statutory personal development curriculum requires schools to give specific attention to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers a medium to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours. (2017/04)

1. At RBAI we seek to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resiliencies of children so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations.
2. Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through whole school and house assemblies and there is a permanent Child Protection sign in the front office and relevant information in each pupil diary and classroom, which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers. Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues: School visitors e.g. police, nurse.

Children/Young People's behaviours

- **Peer Abuse**

Children and young people may be at risk of physical, sexual and emotional bullying and abuse by their peers. Such abuse should always be taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. Where a child or young person has been harmed by another, all school staff should be aware of their responsibilities in relation to both children and young people who perpetrate the abuse as well as those who are victims of it and, where necessary, should contribute to an inter-disciplinary and multi-agency response.

- **Self-Harm**

Self-harm encompasses a wide range of behaviours and things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way, which are damaging. It may indicate a temporary period of emotional pain or distress, or deeper mental health issues which may result in the development of a progressive pattern of worsening self-harm that may ultimately result in death by misadventure or suicide. Self-harm may involve abuse of substances such as alcohol or drugs, including both illegal and/or prescribed drugs.

Self-harming behaviours may indicate that a child or young person has suffered abuse; however, this is not always the case. School staff should share concerns about a child or young person who is self-harming with a member of the safeguarding team who will seek advice from appropriately qualified and experienced professionals including those in the non-statutory sector to make informed assessments of risk in relation to self-harming behaviours.

- **Suicidal Ideation**

Staff must act without delay if they have concerns about a child or young person who presents as being suicidal as it is important that children and young people who communicate thoughts of suicide or engage in para-suicidal behaviours are seen urgently by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, including those in the non-statutory sector, to ensure they are taken seriously, treated with empathy, kindness and understanding and informed assessments of risk and needs can be completed as a matter of priority.

Operation Encompass

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium, and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will contact the school at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of the school safeguarding team. This will allow the school Safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the DT/DDTs greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 'Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools' and a note will be made in the child's Child Protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

Further information see [The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#).

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed and approved annually by the Safeguarding team and by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. It will be implemented through the school's staff induction and training programme and as part of day-to-day practice. Compliance with the policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and periodically by the School's Safeguarding Team. The Board of Governors will also monitor Child Protection activity and the implementation of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Teacher.

Policy reviewed August 2026

Appendix 1

Specific Types of Abuse

Grooming of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child's/young person's loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

If the staff in RBAI become aware of signs that may indicate grooming they will take early action and follow the school's child protection policies and procedures.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017)

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible 'rewards' OR 'benefits' such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging.

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. The abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis.

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the school's child protection policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

Domestic and Sexual violence and abuse can have a profoundly negative effect on a child's emotional, psychological and social well-being. A child does not have to witness domestic violence to be adversely affected by it. Living in a violent or abusive domestic environment is harmful to children.

Domestic violence and abuse is defined as 'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional)

inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.’ Sexual Violence and Abuse is defined as *‘any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/ online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).’* (Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland A Seven Year Strategy: March 2016).

If it comes to the attention of school staff that Domestic Abuse, is or may be, affecting a child this will be passed on to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls, as such, teachers have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, through agreed established procedures set out in our school policy.

Forced Marriage A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in RBAI we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

Children who display harmful sexualised behaviour

Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child’s development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. As a school we support children and young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships. Teachers are often therefore in a good position to consider if behaviour is within the normal continuum or otherwise.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as ‘healthy’, ‘problematic’ or ‘sexually harmful’. Healthy sexual behaviour will normally have no need for intervention however consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting. Problematic sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. For example, a one-off incident may simply require liaising with parents on setting clear direction that the behaviour is unacceptable, explaining boundaries and providing information and education. Alternatively, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the EA CPSS may be required. We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2016/05 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

What is Harmful Sexualised Behaviour?

Harmful sexualised behaviour is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when:

- There is no informed consent by the victim; and/or
- the perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim,

- Harmful sexualised behaviour can include: using age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Using sexual violence or threats.
- Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older - particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not.
- However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them - for example, if the older child is disabled.

Sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the school's Positive Behaviour Policy but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

Harmful sexualised behaviour will always require intervention and in our school, we will refer to our child protection policy and, seek the support that is available from the CPSS.

E safety/Internet abuse

Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, social environments, and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

The overall strategic direction for child safety online is the Keeping Children and Young People Safe: An Online Safety Strategy, published in February 2021. It sets out the Northern Ireland Executive's ambition that all children and young people enjoy the educational, social and economic benefits of the online world, and that they are empowered to do this safely, knowledgeably and without fear.

The Strategy recognises that the ever-changing and fast-growing online environment presents both extensive educational benefits as well challenges in terms of keeping children and young people safe from the dangers of inappropriate communication and content.

Growing Up Online: Children's online activities harm and safety in Northern Ireland – an Evidence Report

Managing the Risks

In January 2014, the SBNI published its report '*An exploration of e-safety messages to young people, parents and practitioners in Northern Ireland*' which identified the associated risks around online safety under four categories:

- **Content risks:** the child or young person is exposed to harmful material.
- **Contact risks:** the child or young person participates in adult initiated online activity.
- **Conduct risks:** the child or young person is a perpetrator or victim in peer-to-peer exchange.

- **Commercial risks:** the child or young person is exposed to inappropriate commercial advertising, marketing schemes or hidden costs.

Twenty-first century life presents dangers including violence, racism, radicalisation and exploitation. Whilst children and young people need to be protected from these dangers, they also need to be educated about how to recognise and avoid the risks, in an age-appropriate manner. Pupils need to know how to cope if they come across inappropriate material or situations online and should be encouraged to seek help and advice when they need it without fear of censure or criminalisation.

We in RBAI have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of pupils accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The school's actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the pupils in the school or on school-organised activities.

Cases of inappropriate use

If the school becomes aware of pupils or members of staff affected by internet abuse, either in school or outside school hours, e.g. trolling, sexting, cyber-bullying, online grooming etc., this will be considered within the RBAI Positive Behaviour and Discipline Policy and the RBAI Anti-bullying Policy.

Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes is a term used to describe the sending or posting of naked or partially naked images, videos or livestreams online by young people under the age of 18, the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobile or over the internet. This could be via text, email, social media and gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. Sharing nudes is sometimes called 'sexting', however this term is often used by young people to talk about sharing sexual messages and not imagery.

There are two aspects to this:

- **Sharing nudes and semi-nudes between individuals in a relationship**

As adults we can question the wisdom of this, but the reality is that some children consider this to be normal and often the result of a child's exploration of relationships. As a consequence, engaging in the taking or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes may not always be intended in a 'harmful' context. Nonetheless, staff must be aware that an image can be shared non-consensually, or a child can be groomed, tricked or coerced into sending nude and semi-nude images.

Pupils also need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual relationship) and in these cases the school will contact the CPSS and PSNI for advice and guidance.

Please be aware that, while offences may technically have been committed by the child/children involved, the matter will be dealt with sensitively and considering all of the circumstances; it is not necessarily the case that they will end up with a criminal record.

It is important that particular care is taken in dealing with any such cases. Adopting scare tactics may discourage a child from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of sexual images. Advice should be sought from CPSS.

- **Sharing an inappropriate image with an intent to cause distress**

If a child has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that you **do not forward it to anyone else**. Schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 ([Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015](#)) to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent - see Sections 33-35 of the Act for more detail. By contacting the PSNI the aim is to help prevent further distribution of the image and to contain the damage it can cause.

If a child has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures will be followed.

Childline's *Report Remove* Tool may be able to assist in having an image blocked or removed to prevent further distribution. <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/report-remove/>

It is also vital to ensure that the victim of abuse receives the correct support. They are likely to feel ashamed, embarrassed, and worried about parental reaction - some may wish to speak to the school independent Counsellor.

Appendix 2

Children with Increased Vulnerabilities

- **Children with a disability**

Children and young people with disabilities (i.e. any child or young person who has a physical, sensory or learning impairment or a significant health condition) may be more vulnerable to abuse and those working with children with disabilities should be aware of any vulnerability factors associated with risk of harm, and any emerging child protection issues.

Staff must be aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult. Staff and volunteers working with children with disabilities will receive training to enable them to identify and refer concerns early in order to allow preventative action to be taken.

- **Children with limited fluency in English**

As with children with a special educational need, children who are not fluent in English should be given the chance to express themselves to a member of staff or other professional with appropriate language/communication skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred.

Designated Teachers should work with their SEN co-ordinators along with school staff with responsibility for newcomer pupils, seeking advice from the EA's Intercultural Education Service to identify and respond to any particular communication needs that a child may have.

All schools should try to create an atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or pupils for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them.

- **Looked After Children**

In consultation with other agencies and professionals, a Health and Social Care Trust may determine that a child or young person's welfare cannot be safeguarded if they remain at home. In these circumstances, a child may be accommodated through a voluntary arrangement with the persons with parental responsibility for the child or the HSCT may make an application to the Court for a Care Order to place the child or young person in an alternative placement provided by the Trust. The HSCT will then make arrangements for the child to be looked after, either permanently or temporarily. It is important that the views of children, young people and their parents and/or others with parental responsibility for the looked child are taken into account when decisions are made.

A member of school staff will attend LAC meetings and will provide a written report. Where necessary, school support will be put in place for the child/young person. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a need to know basis.

- **Children / young people who go missing**

Children and young people who go missing come from all backgrounds and communities and are known to be at greater risk of harm. This includes risks of being sexually abused or exploited although children and young people may also become homeless or a victim or perpetrator of crime. Those who go missing from their family home may have no involvement with services as not all children and young people who run away or go missing from their family home have underlying issues within the family, or are reported to the police as missing.

The patterns of going missing may include overnight absences or those who have infrequent unauthorised absences of short time duration. When a child or young person returns, having been missing for a period, we should be alert to the possibility that they may have been harmed and to any behaviours or relationships or other indicators that children and young people may have been abused.

School staff will work in partnership with those who look after the child or young person who goes missing and, if appropriate, will complete a risk assessment. Current school policies will apply e.g. attendance, safeguarding, relationships and sexuality education.

- **Young people in supported accommodation**

Staff will work in partnership with those agencies involved with young people leaving care and those living in supported accommodation and will provide pastoral support as necessary.

- **Young people who are homeless**

If we become aware that a young person in our school is homeless we will share this information with Social Services whose role is to carry out a comprehensive needs and risk assessment. We will contribute to the assessment and attend multi-disciplinary meetings.

- **Separated, unaccompanied and trafficked children and young people**

Separated children and young people are those who have been separated from their parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver. **Unaccompanied children** and young people are those seeking asylum without the presence of a legal guardian. Consideration must be given to the fact that separated or unaccompanied children may be a victim of human trafficking.

Child Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child or young person, whether by force or not, by a third person or group, for the purpose of different types of exploitation.

If we become aware of a child or young person who may be separated, unaccompanied or a victim of human trafficking we in RBAI will immediately follow our safeguarding and child protection procedures.

- **Children of parents with additional support needs**

Children and young people can be affected by the disability of those caring for them. Parents, carers or siblings with disabilities may have additional support needs which impact on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the family, possibly affecting their education or physical and emotional development. It is important that any action school staff take to safeguard children and young people at risk of harm in these circumstances encompasses joint working between specialist disability and children's social workers and other professionals and agencies involved in providing services to adult family members. This will assist us in ensuring the welfare of the children and young people in the family is promoted and they are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

Where it is known or suspected that parents or carers have impaired ability to care for a child, the safeguarding team will give consideration to the need for a child protection response in addition to the provision of family support and intervention.

- **Gender Identity Issues/Sexual Orientation**

Young people from the LGBTQ+ community may face particular difficulties which could make them more vulnerable to harm. These difficulties could range from intolerance and

homophobic bullying from others to difficulties for the young person themselves in exploring and understanding their sexuality. At such times young people may be more vulnerable to predatory advances from adults seeking to exploit or abuse them. This could impede a young person's ability or willingness to raise concerns if they feel they are at risk or leave young people exposed to contact with people who would exploit them.

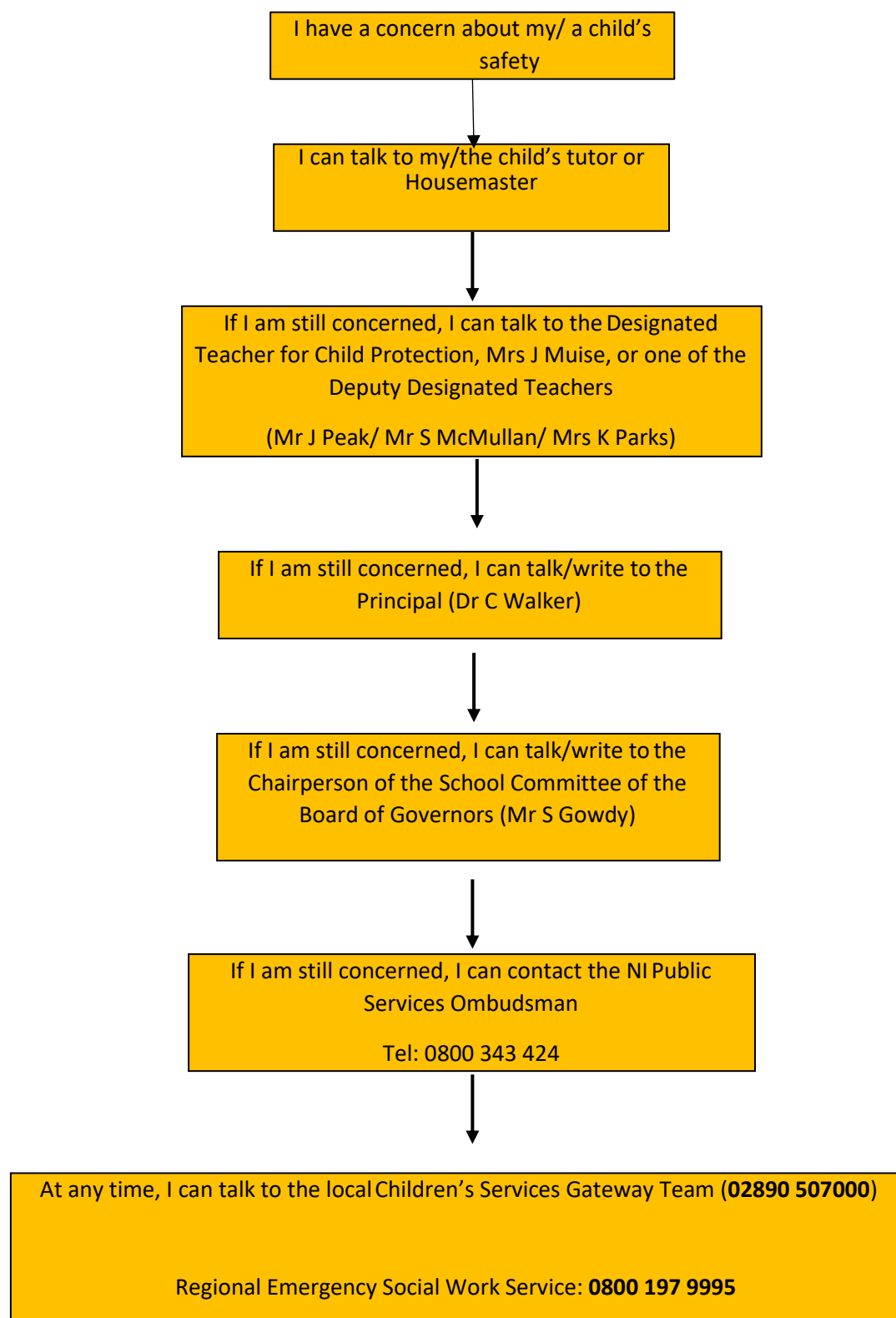
As a staff working with young people from the LGBTQ+ community we will support them to appropriately access information and support on healthy relationships and to report any concerns or risks of abuse or exploitation.

- **Work experience, school trips and educational visits**

Our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people also includes periods when they are in our care outside of the school setting. We will follow DE guidance on educational visits, school trips and work experience to ensure our current safeguarding policies are adhered to and that appropriate staffing levels are in place.

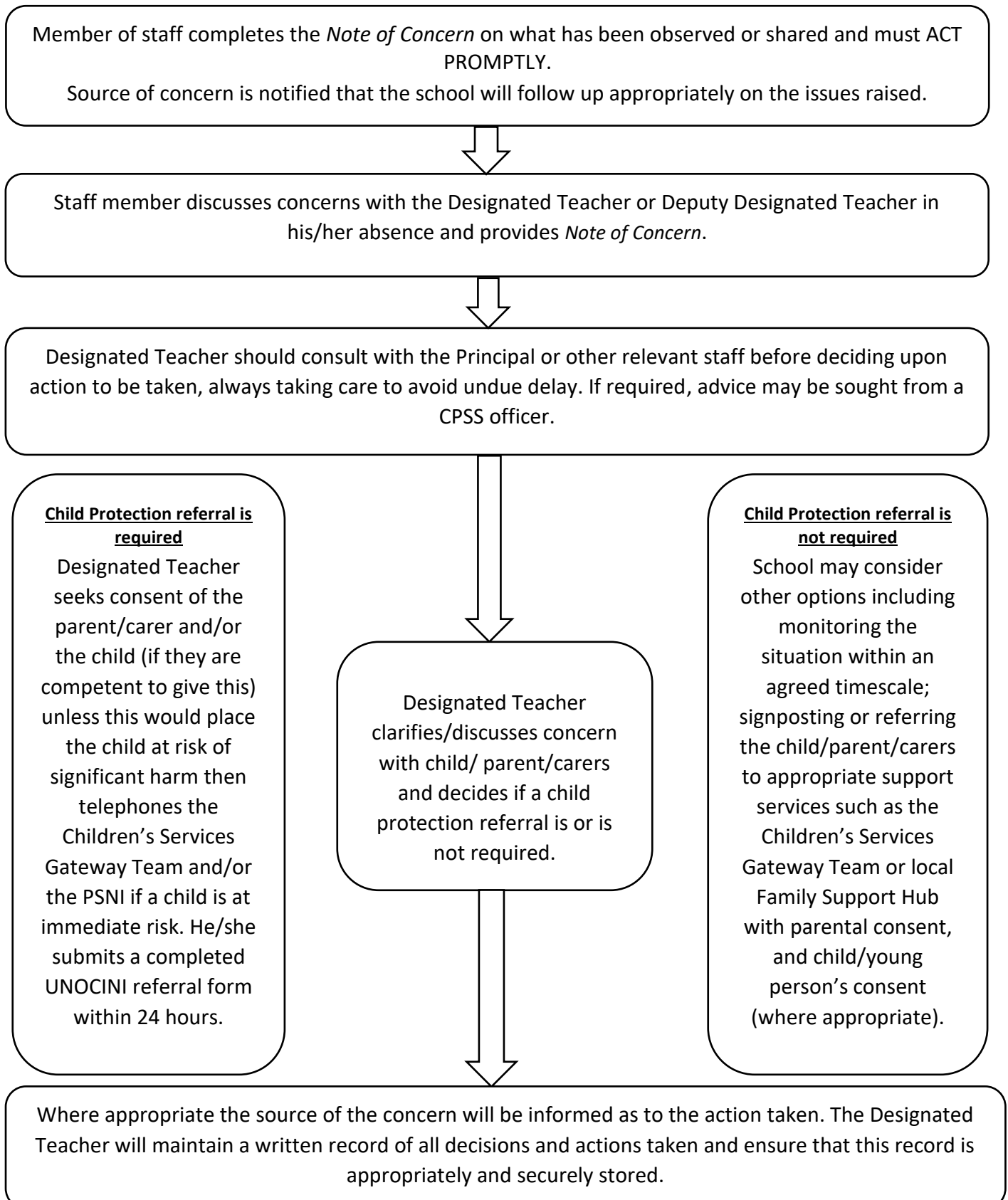
Appendix 3

How a parent/carers can raise a concern about child protection.



Appendix 4

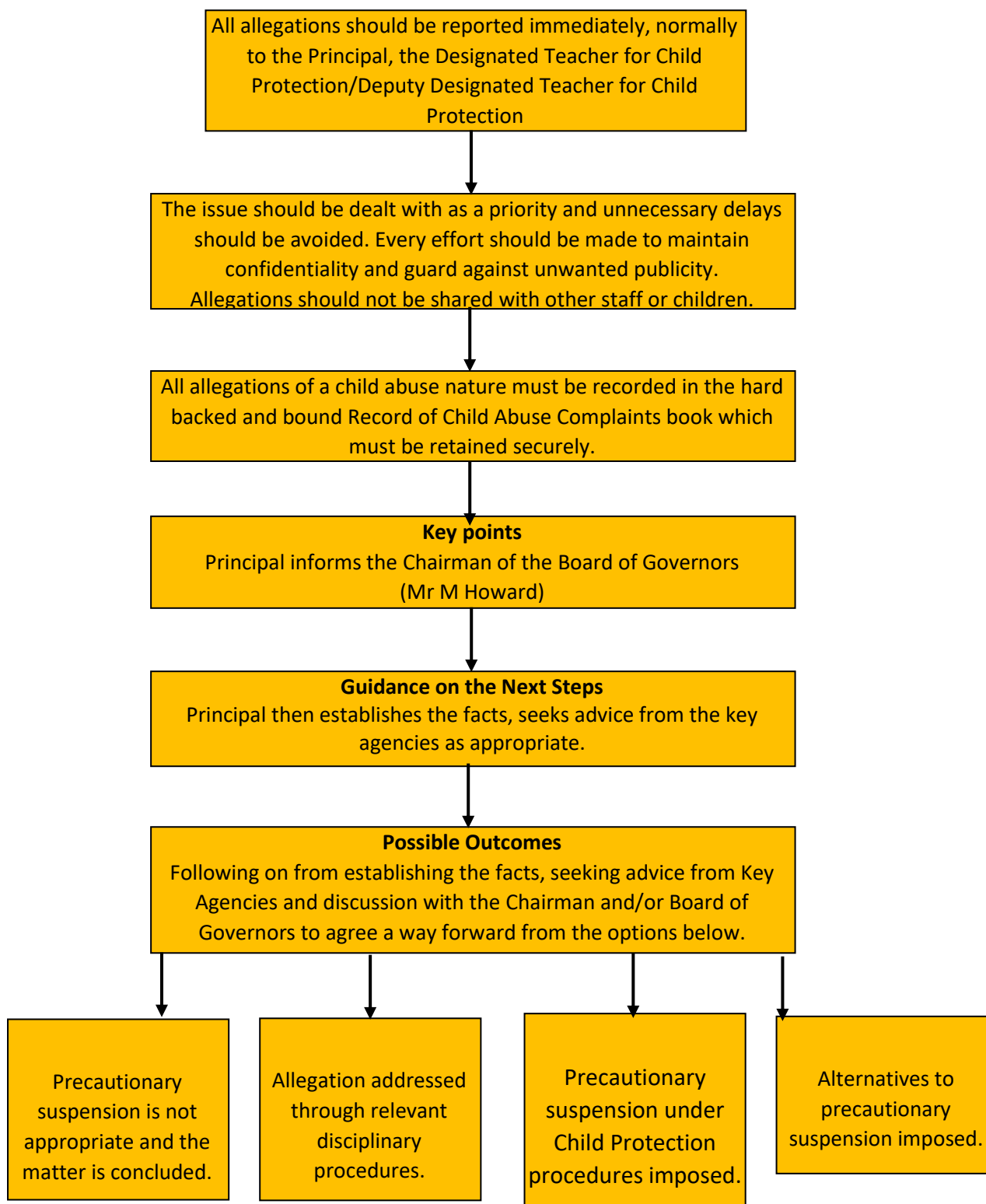
Procedure where the School has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff



Appendix 5

Dealing with allegations of abuse made against a member of staff

The responsibilities and processes to be followed are clearly set out in DE Circular 2015/13
‘Dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff’.



Note of concern

Child protection record – Reports to Designated Teacher

Name of Pupil:
Year Group:
Date, time of incident / disclosure:
Circumstances of incident / disclosure:
Nature and description of concern:
Parties involved, including witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom:
Action taken at time:

Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:
Any further action taken:
Written report passed to Designated Teacher: Yes/No (circle response)
Date and time of report to Designated Teacher: Name of staff member making the report: _____ Signature of Staff Member: _____ Date: _____
Written note from staff member placed on pupil's Child Protection file: Yes/No (circle response) If 'no' state reason:

Signature of Designated Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 7

RECOGNISING ABUSE

Listed below are some of the signs and types of behaviour which may indicate that a child is being abused. In themselves and in isolation they are not evidence of abuse, but may suggest abuse, particularly if a child exhibits several of them, or if a pattern emerges of when or how a child exhibits such signs or behaviour. If child abuse is suspected, it is necessary to identify what it is specifically, that is causing concern.

IN YOUNGER CHILDREN:

- a) Reluctance to go somewhere or to stay with someone.
- b) Loss of appetite.
- c) Clingy, highly dependent behaviour.
- d) Regressive behaviour.
- e) Passivity or very compliant behaviour in relation to adults.
- f) Nightmares, fear of sleeping without a light, reluctance to go to bed.
- g) Fear of going to school, school problems.
- h) Unwillingness to undress/change.
- i) Display of affection in inappropriate ways.

IN OLDER CHILDREN:

- a) Depression.
- b) Withdrawal/Secretiveness.
- c) Poor self-image (may neglect grooming and hygiene).
- d) Lack of involvement in school activities (grades may fall).
- e) Skipping school or avoiding going home.
- f) Excessively seductive behaviour.
- g) Running away.

More Specific Signs and Types of Behaviour are:

NEGLECT

- a) Appearance and development not consistent with age of child.
- b) Physical development not following normal patterns.
- c) Child thrives away from home.
- d) Voracious appetite/constant diarrhoea.
- e) Listlessness/unresponsiveness.
- f) Lack of adequate supervision, in or out of the home.
- g) Lack of adequate physical care.
- h) Health needs not met.
- i) Educational needs not met.

SEXUAL ABUSE

- a) Venereal Disease.
- b) Soreness or injury to genitals.
- c) Recurrent urinary tract infections.
- d) Changes in behaviour e.g. wetting/soiling.
- e) Sleep disturbance.
- f) Inappropriate sexual play/language.
- g) Excessive masturbation.
- h) Self-mutilation/suicide attempts/drug and alcohol abuse.
- i) Psychosomatic illness.
- j) Disturbed eating patterns e.g. bulimia/anorexia.
- k) Escape attempts - running away, staying out persistently, refusing to go home.

PHYSICAL INJURY

- a) Unexplained facial bruising.
- b) Black eyes.
- c) Torn frenulum (inside upper lip).
- d) Fingertip bruising on chest and back.
- e) Bite marks.
- f) Scalds.
- g) Burns - cigarette, object shaped and linear.
- h) Fractures - particularly in a child too young to walk.
- i) Head injuries.
- j) Poisoning.
- k) Injuries of varying ages/time span.
- l) Repeated injuries of a minor nature.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- a) Failure to thrive.
- b) Withdrawn/aggressive or bizarre.
- c) Attention-seeking behaviour.
- d) Inappropriate seeking of affection.
- e) Wetting/soiling in older children.
- f) Difficulty in forming relationships.
- g) Rejection shown by parents.

It is the combination of the above symptoms which could give rise to concern. Any of the above symptoms could be indicative of other conditions unrelated to abuse.

Objective, Scope and Principles

This Code of Conduct, which applies to all teaching staff, support staff and volunteers, is designed to give guidance on the standards of behaviour which should be observed. School staff and volunteers are role models, in a unique position of influence and trust and their behaviour should set a good example to all the pupils within the school.

This professional code of conduct is intended to assist understanding of the School's Safeguarding Policy. It is not intended to cover every eventuality.

The Code includes sections on:

- Setting an Example
- Relationships and Attitudes
- Private Meetings with Pupils
- Physical Contact with Pupils
- Honesty and Integrity
- Conduct Outside of Work
- E-Safety and Internet Use
- Confidentiality

1. Setting an Example

- 1.1. All staff and volunteers in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. Staff and volunteers should therefore, for example, avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times, and demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same. All staff and volunteers should be familiar with all school policies and procedures and to comply with these so as to set a good example to pupils.
- 1.2. Staff and volunteers must always comply with statutory requirements in relation to such issues as discrimination, health and safety and data protection.

2. Relationships and Attitudes

- 2.1. All staff and volunteers should treat pupils with respect and dignity and not in a manner which demeans or undermines them, their parents or carers, or colleagues. Staff and volunteers should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and maturity of their pupils. They should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as sarcasm, making jokes at the expense of pupils, embarrassing or humiliating pupils, discriminating against or favouring pupils. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require thought to ensure that conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Relationships with pupils must be professional at all times and sexual relationships with current pupils are not permitted and may lead to criminal conviction.
- 2.2. Staff and volunteers may have less formal contact with pupils outside of school; perhaps through mutual membership of social groups, sporting organisations, or family connections. Staff and volunteers should not assume that the school would be aware of any such relationship and should therefore consider whether the school should be made aware of the connection.
- 2.3. Staff and volunteers should always behave in a professional manner, which within the context of this Code of Conduct includes such aspects as:
 - acting in a fair, courteous and mature manner to pupils, colleagues and other stakeholders;

- co-operating and liaising with colleagues, as appropriate, to ensure pupils receive a coherent and comprehensive educational service;
- respect for school property;
- taking responsibility for the behaviour and conduct of pupils in the classroom and sharing such responsibility elsewhere on the premises;
- being familiar with communication channels and school procedures applicable to both pupils and staff and volunteers;
- respect for the rights and opinions of others.

3. Private Meetings with Pupils

- 3.1. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews with individual pupils must take place. As far as possible, staff and volunteers should conduct interviews in a room with visual access or with an open door and ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. Where possible, another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

4. Physical Contact with Pupils

- 4.1. To avoid misinterpretations, and so far as is practicable, staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with a pupil.
- 4.2. Staff and volunteers should therefore be cognisant of the guidance issued by the Department on the use of reasonable force as per Section 10.3 of the main safeguarding guidance document (Circular 1999/09 and guidance document *'Towards a Model Policy in Schools on Use of Reasonable Force'*).

5. Honesty and Integrity

- 5.1. All staff and volunteers are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.
- 5.2. Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school (e.g. a supplier of materials) must be declared to the Principal. A record should be kept of all such gifts received. This requirement does not apply to "one off" token gifts from pupils or parents e.g. at Christmas or the end of the school year. Staff and volunteers should be mindful that gifts to individual pupils may be considered inappropriate and could be misinterpreted.

6. Conduct outside of Work

- 6.1. Staff and volunteers should not engage in conduct outside work which could damage the reputation and standing of the school or the staff/ volunteer's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.
- 6.2. Staff and volunteers may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary and should ensure it does not affect their work performance in the school. Advice should be sought from the Principal when considering work outside the school.

7. E-Safety and Internet Use

- 7.1. A staff member or volunteer's off duty hours are their personal concern but all staff and volunteers should exercise caution when using information technology and be fully aware of the risks to themselves and others. For school-based activities, advice is contained in the RBAI Staff Acceptable Use Policy.
- 7.2. Staff and volunteers should exercise particular caution in relation to making online associations/friendships with current pupils via social media and using texting/email facilities to communicate with them. It is preferable that any contact with pupils is made via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment when necessary.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. Staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about pupils including highly sensitive or private information. It should not be shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the pupil's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.
- 8.2. There are some circumstances in which a member of staff or volunteer may be expected to share information about a pupil, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals should pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.
- 8.3. If a member of staff or volunteer is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to senior leadership.
- 8.4. Staff and volunteers need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support pupils, they must not promise confidentiality or request pupils to do the same under any circumstances. Additionally concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to the Principal or a member of the safeguarding team without delay.
- 8.5. The school's child protection arrangements should include any external candidates studying or sitting examinations in the school.

The DE Circulars listed below are used to ensure the appropriate Safeguarding / Child Protection procedures are in place in RBAI.

2003/13	Guidance for Schools on the Welfare and Protection of Pupils' Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003;
2006/08	Child Protection: Training requirement for school governors on staff recruitment and selection panels;
2006/09	Child Protection: Criminal background checking of staff in schools – programme to extend coverage;
2007/01	Acceptable Use of the Internet and Digital Technologies in Schools;
2008/10	From 1 st August 2008 substitute teachers must be booked online via NISTR;
2010/01	Guidance on RSE;
2010/18	Every School a Good School – the Governors' Role;
2011/21	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;
2013/16	Relationship and Sexuality Education policies in schools;
2013/25	eSafety – further guidance;
2014/14	Guidance on how to encourage pupil participation in decision making in schools;
2014/24	EOTAS guidance;
2014/27	Managing information on persons who pose a risk to pupils;
2015/12	From 1 April 2015 the DE conferred powers on the General Teaching Council for NI to enable it to consider cases of serious teacher misconduct and to remove a teacher from its register;
2015/13	Dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff;
2015/22	Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE);
2016/20	Child Protection: Record keeping in Schools;
2016/26	Effective Education Uses of Mobile Digital Devices;
2016/27	Online Safety
2017/04	Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – A Guide for Schools; (Revised in Sept 2024);
2020/07	Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools.

2021/12	Addressing bullying in schools Act (NI) 2016.
2021/13	Interim guidance on the use of restraint & seclusion in Educational settings;
2022/02	Children who display harmful sexualised behaviour;
2023/02	Parental responsibility;
2023/06	Pre-employment / AccessNI check requirements and safer recruitment practices for staff & volunteers working in or providing a service for schools/education settings

Appendix 10 Safeguarding & Child Protection Contacts

Child Protection Support Service (CPSS)

The helpline number is **028 9598 5590** and operates from Monday to Friday from 9.00 am until 4.30 pm.

Duty Social Worker Gateway Team (Health & Social Care Trusts)

GATEWAY TEAMS	CONTACT NUMBER
Belfast	028 9050 7000
Northern	0300 1234 333
South Eastern	0300 1000 300
Southern	028 3756 7100
Western	028 7131 4090
Regional Emergency Social Work Service / Out of Hours for All Areas	028 9504 9999

PSNI

The **Central Referral Unit (CRU)** based in Antrim Road PSNI Station is part of the Public Protection Unit and is the central referral point for child sexual and physical abuse allegations.

The office is open Monday to Sunday, 9 am to 5 pm including public holidays.

Email: cru@psni.police.uk.

CP	Child Protection
CPR	Child Protection Register
CPSS	Child Protection Support Services
CRU	Central Referral Unit (part of the Public Protection Unit)
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
DE	Department of Education
DENI	Department of Education Northern Ireland
DHSSPS	Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety
DOH	Department of Health
EA	Education Authority
EOTAS	Education other than at School
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
Gateway	Gateway Service is the first point of contact for a HSCT
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HR	Human Resources
HSC	Health and Social Care
HSCT	Health and Social Care Trust
SBNI	Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland
LAC	Looked After Children
SEN	Special Educational Needs
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus
RSE	Relationship and Sexuality Education
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
UNOCINI	Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland

Appendix 12 Safeguarding & Child Protection Summary for Pupils

The school acknowledges that it has a pastoral responsibility towards all the pupils in its care and, accordingly, takes all steps necessary to ensure that pupil welfare is safeguarded, and their safety is preserved.

All members of the teaching and support staff are alerted to signs of possible abuse or harm, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation. They have appropriate and relevant advice about procedures to follow in:

- a. their interactions with pupils, and
- b. what to do if they have suspicions about possible abuse.

All concerns raised will be dealt with sensitively and carefully. Pupils and parents can be assured that information is only ever shared with those who need to know.

If you have concerns or worries about yourself or a friend, you can speak to any member of staff that you feel comfortable talking to, such as your tutor, Housemaster or a class teacher.

However, at any time you may also speak to any members of the Safeguarding team:

- **Designated Teacher for Child Protection:** Pastoral Vice Principal Mrs Muise
- **Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection:**
 - Key Stage 3:** Mrs K Parks (Room S10)
 - Key Stage 4:** Mr S McMullan (Room - W1)
 - Key Stage 5:** Mr J. Peak (PE Office/Sixth Form Centre)

Although each has responsibility for the year groups in a Key Stage, you can speak to any of the team. All members of the Safeguarding team have completed the same additional training to help support pupils regarding Safeguarding matters.

Pupils need to be aware of the need for mutual respect with their teachers; to be mindful that all relationships with staff are in a professional capacity, not a friendship.

August 2026