

St Brigid's Primary School

Policy and Procedures on Child Protection

We in St Brigid's School have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge, and we will carry out this duty through our Pastoral Care Policy, which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. One way in which we seek to protect our pupils is by helping them learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staff of our school have also adopted a Code of Conduct for our behaviour towards pupils. This code is set out in the Appendix to this policy statement.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school - teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers - has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child, and the welfare of each child is our paramount consideration. The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also criminal offences.

Responsibilities of Principal and Board of Governors

- The Designated Governor for Child Protection, **Mrs P Martin**, will meet with the Principal and Designated Teacher on a regular basis. The Board of Governors will be informed of the number and nature of incidents through a regular Child Protection Report, which is a standing item on the BoG agenda.
- Records of incidents on child and staff files will be kept for a minimum of 5 years after the date on which they occurred.
- The Principal will follow the procedures as specified by DENI, in Pastoral Care for Schools Child Protection publication, where a complaint of alleged child abuse is made regarding a member of

staff. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be consulted and a decision to take no further action or immediate referral will be made.

- Records
 - (i) A complaint against a school staff member where no further action is deemed necessary - Principal will place a brief record of complaint on the file of the pupil concerned
 - (ii) A complaint against a member of staff where a formal referral is deemed necessary - Record will be signed and dated by the Principal, countersigned by the designated teacher (where neither is the subject of the allegation) and retained in the school on the files of both the child and member of staff concerned. An entry will also be made in the Record of Child Abuse Complaints.
 - (iii) School record of Child Abuse Complaints will be kept in a secure place, will be available to the Board of Governors annually and will be available to ETI during inspections.
- If a complaint is made about the Principal, the Chairman of the Board of Governors must be contacted and he/she will then consult with the Designated Teacher.
- The Principal and Board of Governors will ensure that each member of the school's staff will comply with the Code of Conduct for employees which has been drawn up to reflect Appendix 9 , DE Circular 1999/10

Recruitment of Staff, Volunteers and Sports Coaches

In accordance with the procedures for checking on possible criminal backgrounds of Persons with Access to Children (Appendix 12 DENI Child Protection Document) St Brigid's Primary School will ensure that all persons working in close proximity with children, in either paid or unpaid capacity will have to agree to the vetting procedures of Access NI. Examples of such people include all school staff, peripatetic teachers, CASS officers, sports coaches, staff working in training schemes, health professionals working in school and parent volunteers.

What is Child Abuse?

We use the following definition:

Neglect

- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to cause significant harm.
- It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision.
- It may also include non-organic failure to thrive.

Physical Abuse

- Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.
- This may include, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocation, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriate giving drugs to control behaviour.

Sexual Abuse

- Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.
- They may include non contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse

- Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development,
- It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of another person.
- It may involve causing a child to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child.
- Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional harm.

Domestic Violence

The intentional and persistent physical or emotional abuse of a woman, or of a woman and her children in a way that causes pain, distress or injury.

(Definition by Woman's Aid)

Bullying

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both victim and bully will be personally contacted immediately bullying behaviour is identified.

Any complaint by a parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied will be fully investigated by the designated teacher for child protection, and team action will be taken to protect the victim. This will usually include ensuring that another child or small group of children befriends and supports the child being bullied during the school day. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the designated teacher within one week of making the complaint, indicating the investigation which has been carried out and the action being taken.

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of any privileges or position of responsibility he/she holds in the school. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped.

If a pupil's bullying persists, the second stage will be to instigate the child protection procedure described below. (See Anti-Bullying Policy)

Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse (see *Figure 1*)

The designated teacher for child protection is Mrs Lloyd. In her absence, **Mr Artherton**, principal, will assume responsibility for a child protection matters.

If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or 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 must act promptly.**

He/she should not investigate - this is a matter for the Social Services - but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with her, and make full notes.

The designated teacher will discuss the matter with the principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record is made.

The principal, in consultation with the designated teacher, will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. **If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral through the appropriate Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland form (UNOCINI).** Where there are concerns that the child is in immediate danger Social Services will be contacted immediately with the UNOCINI form to follow. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The principal may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Board's and the CCMS's Designated Officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. **The safety of the child is our first priority.**

Where there are concerns about possible abuse, the principal will inform:

- the Social Services
- Designated Officer [SEELB] Kate Bridge
- Designated Officer [CCMS] Susan Sullivan
- Complete the appropriate sections of the UNOCINI form

(This will be done in an envelope marked 'CONFIDENTIAL - CHILD PROTECTION')

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the principal (or the designated teacher, if he is not available)

must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the designated teacher). Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils, and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the principal, the designated teacher must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken. (*see Figure 2*)

If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do if he/she has concerns about a child, or unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the designated teacher.

If a parent wishes to make a complaint on an issue regarding child protection they should follow the procedure as set out in *Figure 3*.

It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. In the interests of the child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told.

It is important that parents communicate with the school any concerns they have regarding their child's welfare. At all times these issues will be handled sensitively and as far as possible with confidentiality.

Appendices

Figure 1

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

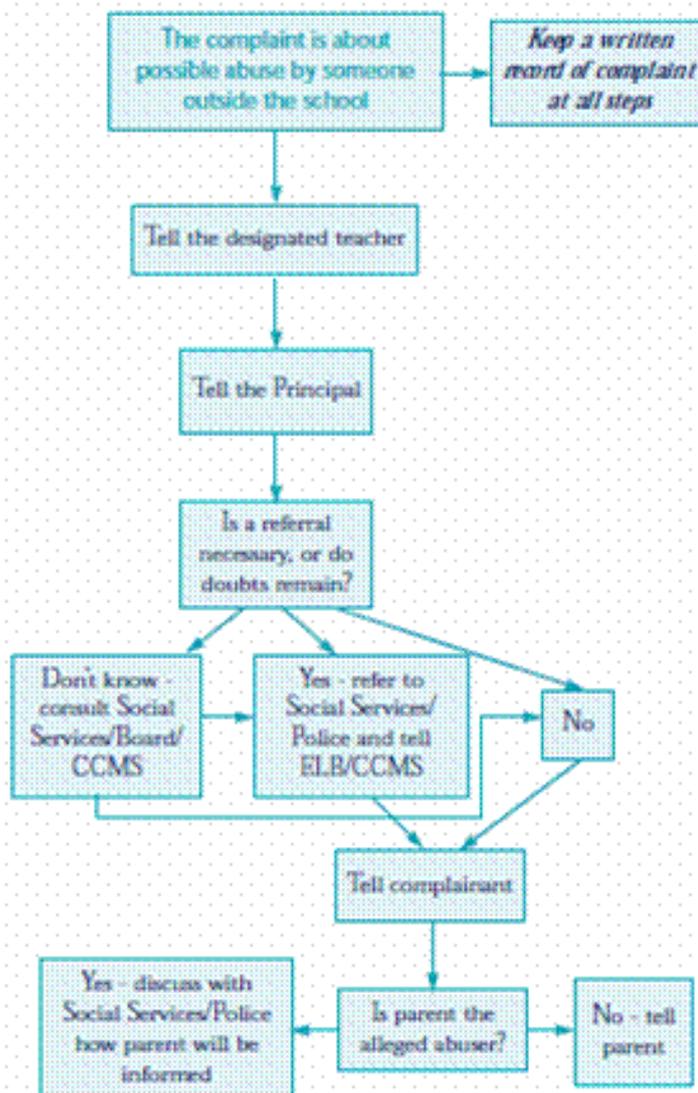


Figure 2

Procedure where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff

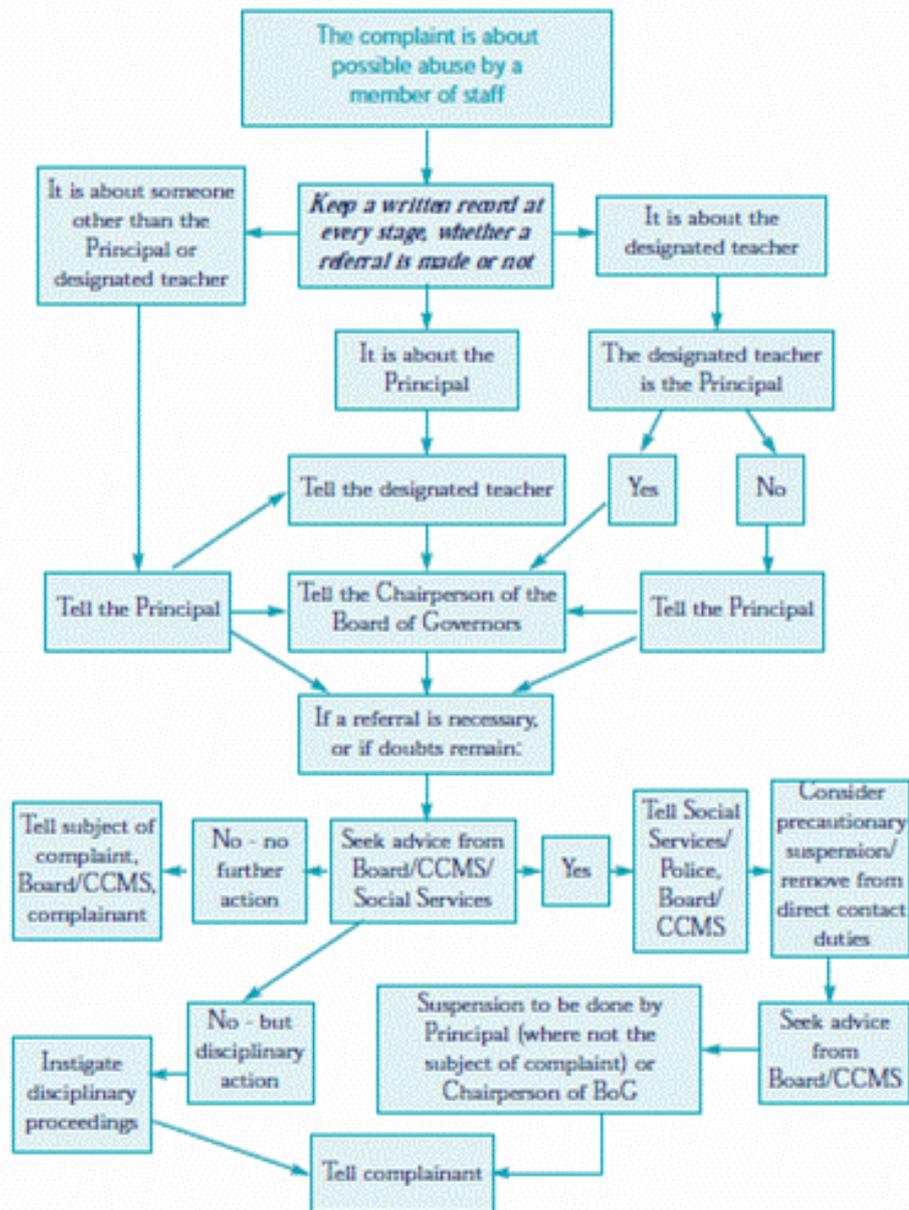
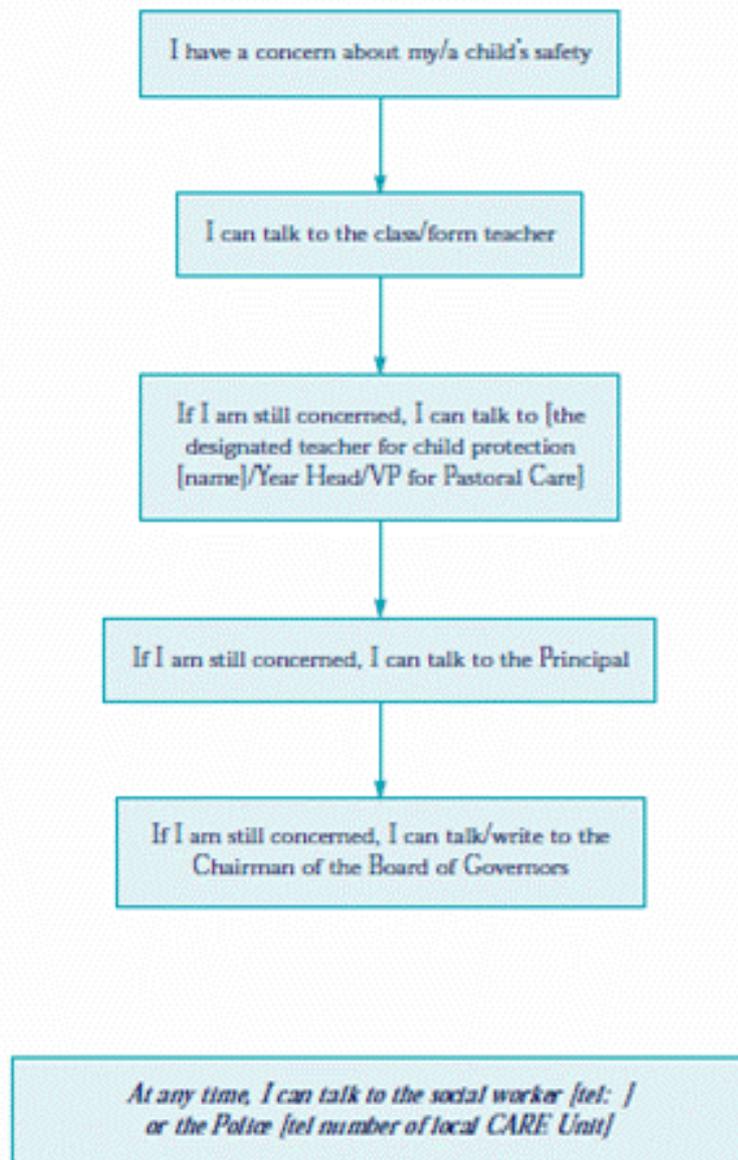


Figure 3: How a parent can make a complaint



Child Protection
How A Parent Can Make A Complaint

I have a concern about my/a child's safety



I can talk to the class teacher



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the designated
teacher for child protection Ann Lloyd



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



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

*At any time,
I can talk to the social worker tel: 0300 1000 300
or the Police Care Unit- 028 90259905*