

**A Policy on Child Protection**  
**St Michael's Primary School**



**Courage Courtesy Concern**

**September 2024**

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## **1. St. Michael's Safeguarding Ethos**

The governors and staff of St Michael's Primary School fully recognise the contribution it makes to safeguarding children. We recognise that all staff, including volunteers, has a full and active part in protecting our pupils from harm.

All the staff and Governors believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child.

This policy is informed by the guidance and procedures set out by DE 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Care in Schools: A guide for schools' (2018)

The central thrust of The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 is that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in all decisions concerning the child. This is also reflected in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration. The 'paramountcy' of the child principle underpins our Child Protection policy and procedures.

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school. The purpose of the procedures set out in this policy is to safeguard and protect our pupils by ensuring that every adult 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 issue 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 a criminal offence. We also recognise the impact on children of an abusive family setting.

There are five main elements to our policy:

1. Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop
2. Developing and implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse
3. Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children
4. Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe
5. Supporting pupils who have been abused in accordance with her agreed child protection plan

## **2. 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
- Attendance
- Drugs
- Positive Behaviour Management
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints
- Educational Visits
- Online Safety
- Managing Critical Incidents
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety
- Intimate Care
- Records Management
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Special Educational Needs
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Whistleblowing

**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.stmichaelsps.com](http://www.stmichaelsps.com)**

### **3. THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM AT ST MICHAEL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Principal:	Mrs Bronagh McCann
Designated Teacher for Child Protection:	Mrs Claire Deane
Designated Governor for Child Protection:	Ms Pauline Hegney
Deputy Designated Teacher: (Pastoral care Coordinator)	Mrs Anne Kennedy Armstrong
Deputy Designated Teacher:	Miss Claire Mullan (SENCO/ICT Coordinator)

#### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **Board of Governors must ensure that:**

- A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- A Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher are appointed in their schools.
- They have a full understanding of the roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection.
- 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 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 are reviewed at least every 3 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 Circular 2012/19 and DE Circular 2013/01.
- They receive a full annual report on all child protection matters (It is best practice that they receive a termly report of child protection activities). 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.

### **Chair of Board of Governors**

The Chairperson of the BoG plays a pivotal role in creating and maintaining the safeguarding ethos within the school environment.

In the event of a safeguarding or child protection complaint being made against the Principal, it is the Chairperson who must assume lead responsibility for managing the complaint/allegation in keeping with guidance issued by the Department (and relevant guidance from other Departments when it comes to other early years settings), employing authorities, and the school's own policies and procedures.

The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring child protection records are kept and for signing and dating annually the Record of Child Abuse Complaints against staff members even if there have been no entries.

### **Designated Governor for Child Protection**

The BoG delegates a specific member of the governing body to take the lead in safeguarding/child protection issues in order to advise the 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 termly updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report;
- Recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff.

## **Designated Teacher for Child Protection**

Every school is required to have a DT and DDT with responsibility for child protection. These are highly skilled roles developed and supported through a structured training programme, requiring knowledge and professional judgement on complex and emotive issues. The role involves:

- The induction and training of all school staff including support staff.
- Being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff.
- Having 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.
- Taking the lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy.
- The promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school.
- Compiling written reports to the BoG regarding child protection

## **Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection**

At St. Michael's we have 2 Deputy Designated Teachers. The role of the DDT is to work co-operatively with the DT in fulfilling his/her responsibilities.

It is important that the DDT works in partnership with the DT so that she develops sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of the DT when required. DDTs are also provided with the same specialist training by CPSS to help them in their role.

## **The School Principal**

The Principal, will assist the BoG to fulfil its safeguarding and child protection duties, keeping them informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to safeguarding and child protection, ensuring any circulars and guidance from DE are shared promptly, and timely inclusion of child protection activities on the BoG meeting agenda. In addition, the Principal takes the lead in managing child protection concerns relating to staff.

The Principal has delegated responsibility for establishing and managing the safeguarding and child protection systems within the school. This includes the appointment and management of suitable staff to the key roles of DT and DDT Designated Teacher posts and ensuring that new staff and volunteers have safeguarding and child protection awareness sessions as part of an induction programme.

It is essential that there is protected time and support to allow the DTs to carry out this important role effectively and that DTs are selected based on knowledge and skills required to fulfil the role.

The Principal must ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy, or summary, of the Child Protection Policy at intake and, at a minimum, every two years.

### **Other Members of School Staff**

- Members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures initially to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or to the Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available.
- Class teachers should complete the Note of Concern ([See Appendix 1](#)) 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

### **Support Staff**

- If any member of the support staff has concerns about a child or staff member they should report these concerns to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher if he/she is not available. A detailed written record of the concerns will be made and any further necessary action will be taken.

### **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.**

- Parents can 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.
- If there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school.
- If their child is absent and should send 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](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection)

**It is essential that the school has up to date contact details for the parent/carer.**

## 4 CHILD PROTECTION DEFINITIONS

Definition of Harm

*(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and young People in Northern Ireland August 2017)*

Harm 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:

**Sexual abuse**

**Emotional abuse**

**Physical abuse**

**Neglect**

**Exploitation**

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

### **Specific Types of Abuse**

In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse that we in St. Michael’s are aware of and have therefore included them in our policy. Please see [Appendix 2](#)

### **Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English or sexual orientation. We have included information about children with increased vulnerabilities in our policy. Please see [Appendix 3](#)

### **Signs and Symptoms of Abuse**

The definition of signs and symptoms of abuse from the SBNI Regional Core Policies and Procedures guidance. [See Appendix 4](#)

## 5 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 harm<sup>1</sup>.

### **If a parent has a potential child protection concern within the school**

In St. Michael's 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 Class Teacher, key Stage leader the Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher for child protection or the Principal.

If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors.

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 5**

### **Where School Has Concerns or Has Been Given Information about Possible Abuse by Someone Other Than a Member of Staff**

In St. Michael's 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 1**) 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 he/she is not available.

The Designated Teacher will consult with the Principal or other relevant staff always taking care to avoid due delay. {If Principal is not available, the Vice principal will step in} If required advice may be sought from the Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection. The Designated Teacher 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.

If a child protection referral is required the Designated Teacher 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 Designated Teacher will phone the Gateway team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI referral form.

If the concern relates to a student over the age of 18 the Designated Teacher will discuss the concerns with the Trust Adult Safeguarding Team or the Team with responsibility for Vulnerable Adults. This team will assess the level of risk.

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

For further detail please see [Appendix 6](#)

### **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 Designated Teacher if the Principal is not available) must be informed immediately. If the complaint is against the Principal then the Designated Teacher should be informed and he/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 7](#) will be followed.

## **6 CONSENT**

Prior to making a referral to Social Services the consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.

In circumstances where the consent of the parent/carer and/or the young person has been sought and is withheld we will consider and where possible respect their wishes. However our primary consideration must be the safety and welfare of the child and we will make a referral in cases where consent is withheld if we believe on the basis of the information available that it is in the best interests of the child/young person to do so.

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 Designated Teacher 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)

In accordance with DE guidance we must consider and develop 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 St. Michael’s are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher and Principal 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.

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.

## **7 SAFE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES**

The selection and appointment process is the starting point for ensuring that only those who are employed to work in close proximity with children, in either paid or unpaid capacity in our school.

In order that all reasonable steps are taken to employ and engage suitable staff to work with the children in our care we follow the guidance on pre-employment checking and safe recruitment practices provided by the Department of Education and have adopted the new

arrangements for vetting and checking of staff prior to appointment or use as volunteers within the school:

- DE Circular 2006/06 Child Protection: Recruitment of People to Work with Children and Young People in Educational Settings
- DE Circular 2006/07 Child Protection: Employment of Substitute Teachers
- DE Circular 2006/08 Child Protection: Training Requirements for School Governors on Staff Recruitment and Selection Panels
- DE Circular 2006/09 Child Protection: Criminal Background Checking of Staff in Schools – Programme to Extend Coverage
- DE Circular 2006/25 Child Protection: Vetting of School Governors
- DE Circular 2008/03 Pre-Employment Checking of Persons to Work in Schools – New Arrangements
- DE Circular 2008/10 Employment of Substitute Teachers
- DE Circular 2012/19 Disclosure and Barring Arrangements: Changes to pre-employment vetting checks for volunteers working in schools from 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012
- DE Circular 2013/01 Disclosure and Barring Arrangements: Guidance for schools and employing authorities on pre-employment vetting checks and safer requirement practices.

## **8 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](#) for a sample staff Code of Conduct.

## **9 THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM -**

We recognise that the school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our pupils by providing pupils with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection.

The school community will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to
- Ensure that all children know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty
- Follow the curriculum for Personal and Development for Mutual Understanding- which equips children with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to whom they should turn for help if the need arises.

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).

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through class assemblies Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues: School visitors e.g. fire fighters, police etc. health visitor parent programmes.

## **10 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Team and approved by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. It will be implemented through the schools 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 Schools 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.

**Date Policy Reviewed:**

**Signed:**

**Designated Teacher**

**Signed:**

**Principal**

**Signed:**

**Chair of Board of Governors**

## SUMMARY

The school has drawn up an Agreed Practice for Child Protection

### CHILD PROTECTION IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

#### Agreed Practice

Designated Teacher	Mrs Claire Deane
If absent Deputy Designated Teacher	Miss Claire Mullan
If absent Deputy Designated Teacher	Mrs Kennedy Armstong

### **Child expresses concern or teacher has a concern**

1. Teacher does not investigate.
2. Teacher reports issue to designated teacher - keep a written report.
3. Designated teacher reports to Principal to plan action to be taken – keep a written report.
4. Principal/Designated teacher refers to
  - a. CCMS Senior Management Officer
  - b. EA Designated Officer
  - c. Social Services
5. If the issue concerns the designated teacher, go to the Principal If issue concerns Principal go to the designated teacher.

**Appendix 1**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**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 any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom:
Action Taken At The Time:
Details Of Any Advice Sought, From Whom And When:
Any Further Action Taken:

<p>Written Report Passed To Designated Teacher:                      Yes:                      No:</p> <p>If 'No' state reason:</p>
<p>Date And Time Of Report To The Designated Teacher:</p>
<p>Written Note From Staff Member Placed On Pupil's Child Protection File</p> <p>Yes                      No</p> <p>If 'No' state reason:</p>

**Name of Staff Member Making the Report:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Staff Member:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Designated Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

Adults may misuse online settings e.g. chat rooms, social and gaming environments and other forms of digital communications, to try and establish contact with children and young people or to share information with other perpetrators, which creates a particular problem because this can occur in real time and there is no permanent record of the interaction or discussion held or information shared. Those working or volunteering with children or young people should be alert to signs that may indicate grooming, and take early action in line with their child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures to enable preventative action to be taken, if possible, before harm occurs. Practitioners should be aware that those involved in grooming may themselves be children or young people, and be acting under the coercion or influence of adults. Such young people must be considered victims of those holding power over them. Careful consideration should always be given to any punitive approach or 'criminalising' young people who may, themselves, still be victims and/or acting under duress, control, threat, the fear of, or actual violence. In consultation with the PSNI and where necessary the PPS, HSC professionals must consider whether children used to groom others should be considered a child in need or requiring protection from significant harm

If the staff in St. Michael's become aware of signs that may indicate grooming they will take early action and follow the school's child protection policies and procedures. The HSCT and PSNI should be involved as early as possible to ensure any evidence that may assist prosecution is not lost and to enable a disruption plan to reduce the victim's contact with the perpetrator(s) and reduce the perpetrator(s) control over the victim to be put in place without delay.

**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).

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE. Although younger children can experience CSE, the average age at which concerns are first identified is 12-15 years of age. Sixteen and seventeen year olds, although legally able to consent to sexual activity can also be sexually exploited.

CSE can be perpetrated by adults or by young people's peers, on an individual or group basis, or a combination of both, and can be perpetrated by females as well as males. While children in care are known to experience disproportionate risk of CSE, **the majority of CSE victims are living at home.**

### **Statutory Responsibilities**

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**

The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy (2016) defines domestic and sexual violence and abuse as follows:-

#### **Domestic Violence and Abuse:**

'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.'

#### **Sexual Violence and Abuse**

'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).' Please note that coercive, exploitative and harmful behaviour includes taking advantage of an individual's incapacity to give informed consent.

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.

#### **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 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 make contact with 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 designated teacher 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 about The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 can be found by following the link to: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk>

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. FGM is a form of child abuse and, 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. Where there is a concern that a child or young person may be at immediate risk of FGM this should be reported to the PSNI without delay. Contact can be made directly to the Sexual Referral Unit (based within the Public Protection Unit) at 028 9025 9299. Where there is a concern that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, referral should be made to the relevant HSCT Gateway Team.

**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 St. Michael's 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 Sexual 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 must also be borne in mind that 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.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as normal, inappropriate, abusive or violent. Normal sexual behaviour will generally have no need for intervention, however consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting. Inappropriate 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. The CPSS will advise if contact with PSNI or Social Services is required. We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2022/02 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

**Abusive Sexual Behaviours** are of significant concern and guidance on the management of the pupils and referrals to other agencies such as Social Services or the Police should be sought from CPSS.

Some examples of abusive sexual behaviours are victimising intent or outcome, the misuse of power, coercion and force to ensure victim compliance, they may be intrusive and may include elements of expressive violence, informed consent is lacking or is not given by the victim, for example because of their special needs or they may have been under the influence of alcohol or other substances

**Violent Sexual Behaviours** are also of significant concern. They may have features of threat, force, coercion or harm to others.

Some examples of violent sexual behaviour include physically violent sexual abuse which is highly intrusive, instrumental violence which is physiologically and or sexually arousing to the perpetrator and may involve sadism.

Advice from CPSS will be required if we are aware of a young person displaying violent sexual behaviour.

## 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.

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.

We in **St. Michael's** 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.

**Sexting** is the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobile or over the internet. There are two aspects to Sexting:

Pupils 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 we will contact local police on 101 for advice and guidance. We may also seek advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service

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 and 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 young person from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of a sexual image.

### 2/Sharing an Inappropriate Image with an Intent to Cause Distress

If a pupil has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that it is **not forwarded to anyone else**. Schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent. For further information see: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted)

If a young person 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 of the school will be followed.

## **Appendix 3**

### **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**

Children whose first language is not English/Newcomer pupils should be given the opportunity 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. DTs and other relevant school staff should seek advice and support from the EA's Intercultural Education Service if necessary. All schools should 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.

- **Pre-School Provision**

Many of the issues in the preceding paragraphs will be relevant to our young children who may have limited communication skills. In addition to the above, staff will follow our Intimate Care policy and procedures in consultation with the child's parent[s]/carer[s]. Teachers, nursery assistants and other adults will come into contact with children while helping them with toileting, washing and changing their clothing. Staff in pre-school settings should

consider whether the Code of Conduct meets the needs of their particular responsibilities and should make clear the boundaries of appropriate physical contact, and their Code to staff and parents.

- **Gender Identity Issues and Sexual Orientation**

Schools should strive to provide a happy environment where all young people feel safe and secure. All pupils have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation. DE requires all grant-aided schools to develop their own policy on how they will address Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the curriculum. It is via this policy that schools are expected to cover issues relating to relationships and sexuality, including those affecting LGB&T children and young people.

<https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/policies-and-guidance/supporting-transgender-young-people>

- **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 and EA 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 4          Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse**

This section contains information for all professionals working with children and families and is not an exhaustive list. The following pages provide guidance only and should not be used as a checklist.

### **2.1          The first indication that a child is being abused may not necessarily be the presence of a severe injury. Concerns may become apparent in a number of ways e.g.**

- by bruises or marks on a child's body
- by remarks made by a child, his parents or friends
- by overhearing conversation by the child, or his parents
- by observing that the child is either being made a scapegoat by or has a poor relationship/bond with his parents.
  
- by a child having sexual knowledge or exhibiting sexualised behaviour which is unusual given his age and/or level of understanding.

- by a child not thriving or developing at a rate which one would expect for his age and stage of development.
- by the observation of a child's behaviour and changes in his behaviour.
- by indications that the family is under stress and needs support in caring for their children.
- by repeat visits to a general practitioner or hospital.

2.2 There may be a series of events which in themselves do not necessarily cause concern but are significant, if viewed together. Initially the incident may not seem serious but it should be remembered that prompt help to a family under stress may prevent minor abuse escalating into something more serious.

2.3 It is important to remember that abused children do not necessarily show fear or anxiety and may appear to have established a sound relationship with their abuser(s). Staff should familiarise themselves on 'attachment theory' and its implications for assessing the bond between parents and their children.

2.4 Suspicions should be raised by e.g.

- discrepancy between an injury and the explanation
- conflicting explanation, or no explanation, for an injury
- delay in seeking treatment for any health problem
- injuries of different ages
- history of previous concerns or injuries
- faltering growth (failure to thrive)
- parents show little, or no, concern about the child's condition or show little warmth or empathy with the child
- evidence of domestic violence
- parents with mental health difficulties, particularly of a psychotic nature
- evidence of parental substance abuse

2.5 Signs and symptoms are indicators and simply highlight the need for further investigation and assessment.

#### **Parental Response to Allegations of Child Abuse Which Raise Concern**

2.6 **Parents' responses to allegations of abuse of their child are very varied. The following types of response are of concern:**

- there may be an unequivocal denial of abuse and possible non-compliance with enquiries.

- parents may over-react, either aggressively or defensively, to a suggestion that they may be responsible for harm to their child.
- there may be reluctance to give information, or the explanation given may be incompatible with the harm caused to the child, or explanations may change over time.
- parents may display a lack of awareness that the child has suffered harm, or that their actions, or the actions of others, may have caused harm.
- parents may seek to minimise the severity of the abuse, or not accept that their actions constitute abuse.
- parents may fail to engage with professionals.
- blame or responsibility for the harm may be inappropriately placed on the child or an unnamed third party.
- parents may seek help on matters unrelated to the abuse or its causes (this may be to deflect attention away from the child and his injuries).
- the parents and/or child may go missing.

### **Physical Abuse**

- 2.7 Children receive bumps and bruises as a result of the rough and tumble of normal play. Most children will have bruises or other injuries, therefore, from time to time. These will be accidental and can be easily explained.
- 2.8 It is not necessary to establish intent to cause harm to the child to conclude that the child has been subject to abuse. Physical abuse can occur through acts of both commission and/or omission.
- 2.9 Insignificant but repeated injuries, however minor, may be symptomatic of a family in crisis and, if no action is taken, the child may be further injured. All injuries should be noted and collated in the child's records and analysed to assess if the child requires to be safeguarded.
- 2.10 If on initial examination the injury is not felt to be compatible with the explanation given or suggest abuse it should be discussed with a senior paediatrician.
- 2.11 A small number of children suffer from rare conditions, e.g. haemophilia or brittle bone disease, which makes them susceptible to bruising and fractures. It is important to remain aware, however, that in such children some injuries may have a non-accidental cause. A "clotting screen" only excludes the common conditions which may cause spontaneous bleeding. If the history suggests a bleeding disorder, referral to a haematologist will be required.

## Recognition of Physical Abuse

### a) Bruises + Soft Tissue Injuries

2.12 Common sites for accidental bruising depend on the developmental stage of the child. They include:

- forehead
- crown of head
- bony spinal protuberances
- elbows and below
- hips
- hands
- shins

2.13 Less common sites for accidental bruising include:

- Eyes
- Ears
- Cheeks
- Mouth
- Neck
- Shoulders
- Chest
- Upper and Inner Arms
- Stomach
- Genitals
- Upper and Inner Thighs
- Lower Back and Buttocks
- Upper Lip and Frenulum
- Back of the Hands.

2.14 **Non-accidental bruises may be:**

- frequent
- patterned, e.g. finger and thumb marks
- in unusual positions, (note developmental level and activity of the child).

Research on aging of bruises (from photographs) has shown that it is impossible to accurately age bruises although it can be concluded that a bruise with a yellow colour is more than 18 hours old. Tender or swollen bruises are more likely to be fresh. It is not possible to conclude definitely that bruises of different colours were sustained at different times.

**The following should give rise to concern e.g.**

- bruising in a non-mobile child, in the absence of an adequate explanation,
- bruises other than at the common sites of accidental injury for a child of that developmental stage,
- facial bruising, particularly around the eyes, cheeks, mouth or ears, especially in very young children.
- soft tissue bruising, on e.g. cheeks, arms and inner surface of thighs, with no adequate explanation.
- a torn upper lip frenulum (skin which joins the lip and gum).
- patterned bruising e.g. linear or outline bruising, hand marks (due to grab, slap or pinch may be petechial), strap marks particularly on the buttocks or back.
- ligature marks caused by tying up or strangulation.

2.15 Most falls or accidents produce one bruise on a single surface, usually a bony protuberance. A child who falls downstairs would generally only have one or two bruises. Children usually fall forwards and therefore bruising is most usually found on the front of the body. In addition, there may be marks on their hands if they have tried to break their fall.

2.16 Bruising may be difficult to see on a dark skinned child. Mongolian blue spots are natural pigmentation to the skin, which may be mistaken for bruising. These purplish-blue skin markings are most commonly found on the backs of children whose parents are darker skinned.

**b) Eye Injuries**

**2.17 Injuries which should give cause for concern:**

- black eyes can occur from any direct injury, both accidental and non-accidental. Determining how the injury occurred is vital, therefore; bilateral "black eyes" can occur accidentally as a result of blood tracking from a very hard blow to the central forehead (Injury should be evident on mid-forehead, bridge of nose). It is rare for both eyes to be bruised separately, accidentally however and at the same time.
- sub conjunctival haemorrhage
- retinal haemorrhage.

**c) Burns and Scalds**

**2.18 Accidental scalds often:**

- are on the upper part of the body
- are on a convex (curved) surface
- are irregular
- are superficial
- leave a recognisable pattern.

2.19 **It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns. Any burn or scald with a clear outline should be regarded with suspicion e.g.**

- circular burns
- linear burns
- burns of uniform depth over a large area
- friction burns
- scalds that have a line which could indicate immersion or poured liquid
- splash marks
- old scars indicating previous burns or scalds.

2.20 **When a child presents with a burn or scald it is important to remember:**

- a responsible adult checks the temperature of the bath before a child gets in to it.
- a child is unlikely to sit down voluntarily in too hot water and cannot accidentally scald his bottom without also scalding his feet.
- "doughnut" shaped burns to the buttocks often indicate that a child has been held down in hot water, with the buttocks held against the water container e.g. bath, sink etc.
- a child getting into too hot water of its own accord will struggle to get out and there are likely to be splash marks.
- small round burns may be cigarette burns, but can often be confused with skin conditions. Where there is doubt, a medical/dermatology opinion should be sought.

#### **d) Fractures**

2.21 The potential for a fracture should be considered if there is pain, swelling and discoloration over a bone or joint or a child is not using a limb, especially in younger children. The majority of fractures normally cause pain and it is very difficult for a parent to be unaware that a child has been hurt. In infants, rib and metaphysical limb fractures may produce no detectable ongoing pain however.

- 2.22 It is very rare for a child aged under one year to sustain a fracture accidentally, but there may be some underlying medical condition, e.g. brittle bone disease, which can cause fractures in babies.
- 2.23 The most common non-accidental fractures are to the long bones in the arms and legs and to the ribs. The following should give cause for concern and further investigation may be necessary:
- any fracture in a child under one year of age
  - any skull fracture in children under three years of age
  - a history of previous skeletal injuries which may suggest abuse
  - skeletal injuries at different stages of healing
  - evidence of previous fractures which were left untreated.
- e) Scars**
- 2.24 Children may have scars from previous injuries. Particular note should be taken if there is a large number of scars of different ages, or of unusual shapes or large scars from burns or lacerations that have not received medical treatment.
- f) Bites**
- 2.25 Bites are always non-accidental in origin; they can be caused by animals or human beings (adult/child); a dental surgeon with forensic experience may be needed to secure detailed evidence in such cases.
- g) Other Types of Physical Injuries**
- 2.26
- poisoning, either through acts of omission or commission
  - ingestion of other damaging substances, e.g. bleach
  - administration of drugs to children where they are not medically indicated or prescribed
  - female genital mutilation, which is an offence, regardless of cultural reasons
  - unexplained neurological signs and symptoms, e.g. subdural haematoma
- h) Fabricated or Induced Illness**
- 2.27 Fabricated or induced illness, previously known as Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, is a condition where a child suffers harm through the deliberate action of the main carer, in most cases the mother, but which is attributed to another medical cause.
- 2.28 It is important not to confuse this deliberate activity with the behaviour and actions of over-anxious parents who constantly seek advice from doctors, health visitors and other health professionals about their child's wellbeing.

2.29 There is a need to exercise caution about attributing a child's illness, in the absence of a medical diagnosis, to deliberate activity on the part of a parent or carer to a fabricated or induced illness, as stated in the Court of Appeal judgement in the case of Angela Cannings.

(R v Cannings (2004) EWCA Crim1 (19 January 2004)).

2.30 **The following behaviours exhibited by parents can be associated with fabricated or induced illness:**

- deliberately inducing symptoms in children by administering medication or other substances, or by means of intentional suffocation.
- interfering with treatments by over-dosing, not administering them or interfering with medical equipment such as infusion lines or not complying with professional advice, resulting in significant harm.
- claiming the child has symptoms which may be unverifiable unless observed directly, such as pain, frequency of passing urine, vomiting or fits.
- exaggerating symptoms, causing professionals to undertake investigations and treatments which may be invasive, unnecessary and, therefore, are harmful and possibly dangerous.
- obtaining specialist treatments or equipment for children who do not require them.
- alleging psychological illness in a child.

2.31 **There are a number of presentations in which fabricated or induced illness may be a possibility. These are:**

- failure to thrive/growth faltering (sometimes through deliberate withholding of food.)
- fabrication of medical symptoms especially where there is no independent witness
- convulsions.
- pyrexia (high temperature).
- cyanotic episode (reported blue tinge to the skin due to lack of oxygen).
- apnoea (stops breathing).
- allergies
- asthmatic attacks
- unexplained bleeding (especially anal or genital or bleeding from the ears)
- frequent unsubstantiated allegations of sexual abuse, especially when accompanied by demands for medical examinations
- frequent 'accidental' overdoses (especially in very young children).

2.32 **Concerns may arise when:**

- reported symptoms and signs found on examinations are not (3 explained by any medical condition from which the child may be suffering).
- physical examination and results of medical investigations do not explain reported symptoms and signs.
- there is an inexplicably poor response to prescribed medication and other treatment.
- new symptoms are reported on resolution of previous ones.
- reported symptoms and/or clinical signs do not occur when the carers are absent
- over time the child is repeatedly presented to health professionals with a range of signs and symptoms.
- the child's normal, daily life activities are being curtailed beyond that which might be expected for any medical disorder or disability from which the child is known to suffer.

2.33 It is important to note that the child may also have an illness that has been diagnosed and needs regular treatment. This may make the diagnosis of fabricated or induced illness difficult, as the presenting symptoms may be similar to those of the diagnosed illness.

### **Sexual Abuse**

2.34 Most child victims are sexually abused by someone they know, either a family member or someone well known to them or their family. In recent years there has been an increasing recognition that both male and female children and older children are sexually abused to a greater extent than had previously been realised.

2.35 There are no 'typical' sexually abusing families. Children who have been sexually abused are likely to have been put under considerable pressure not to reveal what has been happening to them. Sexual abuse is damaging to children, both in the short and long term.

2.36 Both boys and girls of all ages are abused and the abuse may continue for many years before it is disclosed. Abusers may be both male and female.

2.37 It is important to note that children and young people may also abuse other children sexually.

2.38 Children disclosing sexual abuse have the right to be listened to and to have their allegations taken seriously. Research shows it is rare for children to invent allegations of sexual abuse and that in fact they are more likely to claim they are not being abused when they are.

2.39 It is important that the indicators listed below are assessed in terms of significance and in the context of the child's life, before concluding that the child is, or has been, sexually abused.

Some indicators take on a greater, or lesser, importance depending upon the child's age.

### **Recognition of Sexual Abuse**

2.40 Sexual abuse often presents in an obscure way. Whilst some child victims have obvious genital injuries, a sexually transmitted infection or are pregnant, relatively few children are so easily diagnosed. The majority of children subjected to sexual abuse, even when penetration has occurred, have on medical examination no evidence of the abuse having occurred.

2.41 The following indicators of sexual abuse may be observed in a child. There may be occasions when no symptoms are present but it is still thought that a child may be, or has been, sexually abused. Suspicions increase where several features are present together. **The following list is not exhaustive and should not be used as a check list.**

### **Pre-School Child (0-4years)**

2.42 **Possible physical indicators in the pre-school aged child include:**

- bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs
- itching, soreness, discharge or unexplained bleeding
- physical damage to genital area or mouth
- signs of sexually transmitted infections
- pain on urination
- semen in vagina, anus, external genitalia
- difficulty in walking or sitting
- torn, stained or bloody underclothes or evidence of clothing having been removed and replaced
- psychosomatic symptoms such as recurrent abdominal pain or headache.

2.43 **Possible behavioural indicators include:**

- unusual behaviour associated with the changing of nappy/underwear, e.g. fear of being touched/hurt, holding legs rigid and stiff or verbalisation like "stop hurting me".
- heightened genital awareness - touching, looking, verbal references to genitals, interest in other children's or adults' genitals.
- using objects for masturbation - dolls, toys with phallic-like projections.
- rubbing genital area on an adult - wanting to smell genital area of an adult, asking adult to touch or smell their genitals.
- simulated sexual activity with another child e.g. replaying the sexually abusive event or wanting to touch other children etc.
- simulated sexual activity with dolls, cuddly toys.
- fear of being alone with adult persons of a specific sex, especially that of the suspected abuser.
- self-mutilation e.g. picking at sores, sticking sharp objects in the vagina, head banging etc.
- social isolation - the child plays alone and withdraws into a private world.
- inappropriate displays of affections between parent and child who behave more like lovers.
- fear of going to bed and/or overdressing for bed.
- child takes over 'the mothering role' in the family whether or not the mother is present.

### **Primary School Age Children**

2.44

**In addition to the above there may be other behaviour especially noticeable in school:**

- poor peer group relationships and inability to make friends.
- inability to concentrate, learning difficulties or a sudden drop in school performance.

- reluctance to participate in physical activity or to change clothes for physical education, games or swimming.
- unusual or bizarre sexual themes in child's art work or stories.
- frequent absences from school that are justified by one parent only, apparently without regard for its implications for the child's school performance.
- unusual reluctance or fear of going home after school.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 2.46 Emotional abuse is as damaging as other, visible, forms of abuse in terms of its impact on the child. There is increasing evidence of the adverse long-term consequences for children's development where they have been subject to emotional abuse. Emotional abuse has an impact on a child's physical health, mental health, behaviour and self-esteem. It can be particularly damaging for children aged 0 to 3 years.
- 2.47 Emotional abuse may take the form of under-protection, and/or over-protection, of the child, which has a significant negative impact on a child's development.
- 2.48 The parents' physical care of the child, and his environment, may appear to meet the child's needs, but it is important to remain aware of the interactions and relationship which occur between the child and his parents to determine if they are nurturing and appropriate.
- 2.49 An emotionally abused child may be subject to constant criticism and being made a scapegoat, the continuous withholding of approval and affection, severe discipline or a total lack of appropriate boundaries and control. A child may be used to fulfil a parent's emotional needs.
- 2.50 The potential of emotional abuse should always be considered in referrals where instances of domestic violence have been reported.

### **Recognition of Emotional Abuse**

- 2.52 Whilst emotional abuse can occur in the absence of other types of abuse, it is important to recognise that it does often co-exist with them, to a greater or lesser extent.

## **Child Behaviours associated with Emotional Abuse**

2.53 Some of the symptoms and signs seen in children who are emotionally abused are presented below. It is the degree and persistence of such symptoms that should result in the consideration of emotional abuse as a possibility. Importantly, it should be remembered that whilst these symptoms may suggest emotional abuse they are not necessarily pathognomic of this since they often can be seen in other conditions.

2.54 **Possible behaviours that may indicate emotional abuse include:**

- serious emotional reactions, characterised by withdrawal, anxiety, social and home fears etc.
- marked behavioural and conduct difficulties, e.g. opposition and aggression, stealing, running away, promiscuity, lying.
- persistent relationship difficulties, e.g. extreme clinginess, intense separation reaction.
- physical problems such as repeated illnesses, severe eating problems, severe toileting problem.
- extremes of self-stimulatory behaviours, e.g. head banging, comfort seeking, masturbation etc.
- very low self-esteem, often unable to accept praise or to trust and lack of self-pride.
- lack of any sense of pleasure in achievement, over-serious or apathetic.
- over anxiety, e.g. constantly checking or over anxious to please.
- developmental delay in young children, and failure to reach potential in learning.

## **Parental Behaviour Associated with Emotional Abuse**

2.55 **Behaviour shown by parents which, if persistent, may indicate emotionally abusive behaviour includes:**

- extreme emotions and behaviours towards their child including criticism, negativity, rejecting attitudes, hostility etc.
- fostering extreme dependency in the child
- harsh disciplining, inconsistent disciplining and the use of emotional sanctions such as withdrawal of love
- expectations and demands which are not appropriate for the developmental stage of the child, e.g. too high or too low
- exposure of the child to family violence and abuse
- inconsistent and unpredictable responses to the child
- contradictory, confusing or misleading messages in communicating with the child

- serious physical or psychiatric illness of a parent where the emotional needs of the child are not capable of being considered and/or appropriately met
- induction of the child into bizarre parental belief systems
- break-down in parental relationship with chronic, bitter conflict over contact or residence arrangements for the child
- major and repeated familial change, e.g. separations and reconstitution of families and/or changes of address
- making a child a scapegoat within the family

### **Neglect**

2.56 Neglect and failure to thrive/growth faltering for non-organic reasons requires medical diagnosis. Non-organic failure to thrive is where there is a poor growth for which no medical cause is found, especially when there is a dramatic improvement in growth on a nutritional diet away from the parent's care. Failure to thrive tends to be associated with young children but neglect can also cause difficulties for older children.

2.57 There is a tendency to associate neglect with poverty and social disadvantage. Persistent neglect over long periods of time is likely to have causes other than poverty, however. There has to be a distinction made between financial poverty and emotional poverty.

2.58 **There are a number of types of neglect that can occur separately or together, for example:**

- medical neglect
- educational neglect
- simulative neglect environmental neglect
- environmental neglect
- failure to provide adequate supervision and a safe environment.

### **Recognition of Neglect**

2.59 Neglect is a chronic, persistent problem. The concerns about the parents not providing "good enough" care for their child will develop over time. It is the accumulation of such concerns which will trigger the need to invoke the Child Protection Process. In cases of neglect it is important that details about the standard of care of the child are recorded and there is regular inter-agency sharing of this information.

2.60 It is important to remember that the degree of neglect can fluctuate, sometimes rapidly, therefore ongoing inter-agency assessment and monitoring is essential.

2.61 The assessment of neglect should take account of the child's age and stage of development, whether the neglect is severe in nature and whether it is resulting in, or likely to result in, significant impairment to the child's health and development.

2.62 The following areas should be considered when assessing whether the quality of care a child receives constitutes neglect.

### **Child**

2.63 **Health presentation indicators include:**

- non-organic failure to thrive (growth faltering)
- poor weight gain (improvement when away from the care of the parents)
- poor height gain
- unmet medical needs
- untreated head lice/other infestations
- frequent attendance at 'accident and emergency' and/or frequent hospital admissions
- tired or depressed child, including a child who is anaemic or has rickets
- poor hygiene
- poor or inappropriate clothing for the time of year
- abnormal eating behaviour (bingeing or hoarding).

2.64 **Emotional and behavioural development indicators include:**

- developmental delay/special needs
- presents as being under-stimulated
- abnormal reaction to separation/ or attachment, disorder
- over-active and/or aggressive
- soiling and/or wetting
- repeated running away from home
- substance misuse
- offending behaviour, including stealing food
- teenage pregnancy.

2.65 **Family and social relationship indicators include**

- high criticism/low warmth
- excluded by family
- sibling violence
- isolated child
- attachment disorders and /or seeking comfort from strangers
- left unattended/or to care for other children
- left to wander alone day or night
- constantly late to school/late being collected
- not wanting to go home from school or refusing to go to school
- poor attendance at school/nursery
- frequent name changes and/or change of address or parental figures within the home.

- management of a child with a disability who is not attaining the level of functioning which is commensurate with the disability.

Consideration should be given as to whether a child and adolescent mental health assessment is required. Have all children in the family been seen and their views explored and documented?

## **Parents**

2.66

### **Lack of emotional warmth indicators include:**

- unrealistic expectations of child
- inability to consider or put child's needs first
- name calling/degrading remarks
- lack of appropriate affection for the child
- violence within the home from which the child is not shielded
- partner resenting non-biological child and hostile in attitude towards him
- failure to provide basic care for the child.

2.67

### **Lack of stability indicators include:**

- frequent changes of partners
- poor family support/inappropriate support
- lack of consistent relationships
- frequent moves of home
- enforced unemployment
- drug, alcohol or substance dependency
- financial pressures/debt
- absence of local support networks, neighbours etc.

2.68

### **Issues relating to providing guidance and setting boundaries indicators include:**

- poor boundary setting
- inconsistent attitudes and reactions, especially to child's behaviour
- continuously failing appointments
- refusing offers of help and services
- failure to seek or use advice and/or help offered appropriately
- seeks to mislead professionals by providing inaccurate or confusing information
- failure to provide safe environment.

2.69

### **Social Presentation**

- aggressive/threatening behaviour towards professionals and volunteers
- disguised compliance
- IOW self-esteem

- lack of self-care.

2.70 **Health**

- mental ill health
- substance misuse
- learning difficulties
- (post-natal) depression
- history of parental child abuse or poor parenting
- physical health.

**Home and Environmental Conditions**

2.71 The following home and environmental conditions should be considered:

- poor housing conditions
- overcrowding
- lack of water, heating, sanitation
- no access to washing machine
- piles of dirty washing
- little or no adequate clean bedding/furniture
- little or no food in cupboards
- human and/or animal excrement
- uncared for animals
- referrals to environmental health
- unsafe environment
- rural isolation.

2.72 **Impediments to ongoing assessment and appropriate multidisciplinary support**

- failure to see the child
- no ease of access to whole house
- fear of violence and aggression
- failure to seek support and advice or consultation, as appropriate, from line manager
- failure to record concern and initial impact
- inability to retain objectivity
- unwitting collusion with family
- failure to see beyond conditions in the home
- child's view is lost
- geographical stereotyping
- minimising concern
- poor networking amongst professionals
- inability to see what is/is not acceptable;
- familiarity breeding contempt; and
- failure to make connections with information available from other services.

(Hammersmith & Fulham Inter-Agency Procedures 2002)

When staff become aware of any of the above features they should review the case with their line manager.

### **Children with Disability**

- 2.73 In recognising child abuse, all professionals should be aware that children with a disability can be particularly vulnerable to abuse. They may need a high degree of physical care, they may have less access to protection and there may be a reluctance on the part of professionals to consider the possibility of abuse.

### **Recognition of Abuse of Children with Disability**

- 2.74 Recognition of abuse can be difficult in that:

- symptoms and signs may be confused
- the child may not recognise the behaviour as abusive
- the child may have communication difficulties and be unable to disclose abuse
- there may be a dependency on several adults for intimate care
- there is a reluctance to accept that children with disabilities may be abused.

- 2.75 Children with disability will usually display the same symptoms and signs of abuse as other children. These may be incorrectly attributed, however, to the child's disability.

### **Risk Factors Associated with Child Abuse**

- 2.76 A number of factors may increase the likelihood of abuse to a child. The following list is not exhaustive and does not preclude the possibility of abuse in families where none of these factors are evident.

#### **Child**

- poor bonding due to neo-natal problems
- attachment interfered with by multiple caring arrangements
- a 'difficult' child, a 'demanding' baby
- a child under five years is considered to be most vulnerable
- a child's name or sibling's names previously on the Child Protection Register
- a baby/child with feeding/sleeping difficulties
- birth defects/chronic illness/developmental delay.

#### **Parents**

- both young and immature (i.e. aged 20 years and under) at birth of the child
- parental history of deprivation and/or abuse
- slow jealousy and rivalry with the child

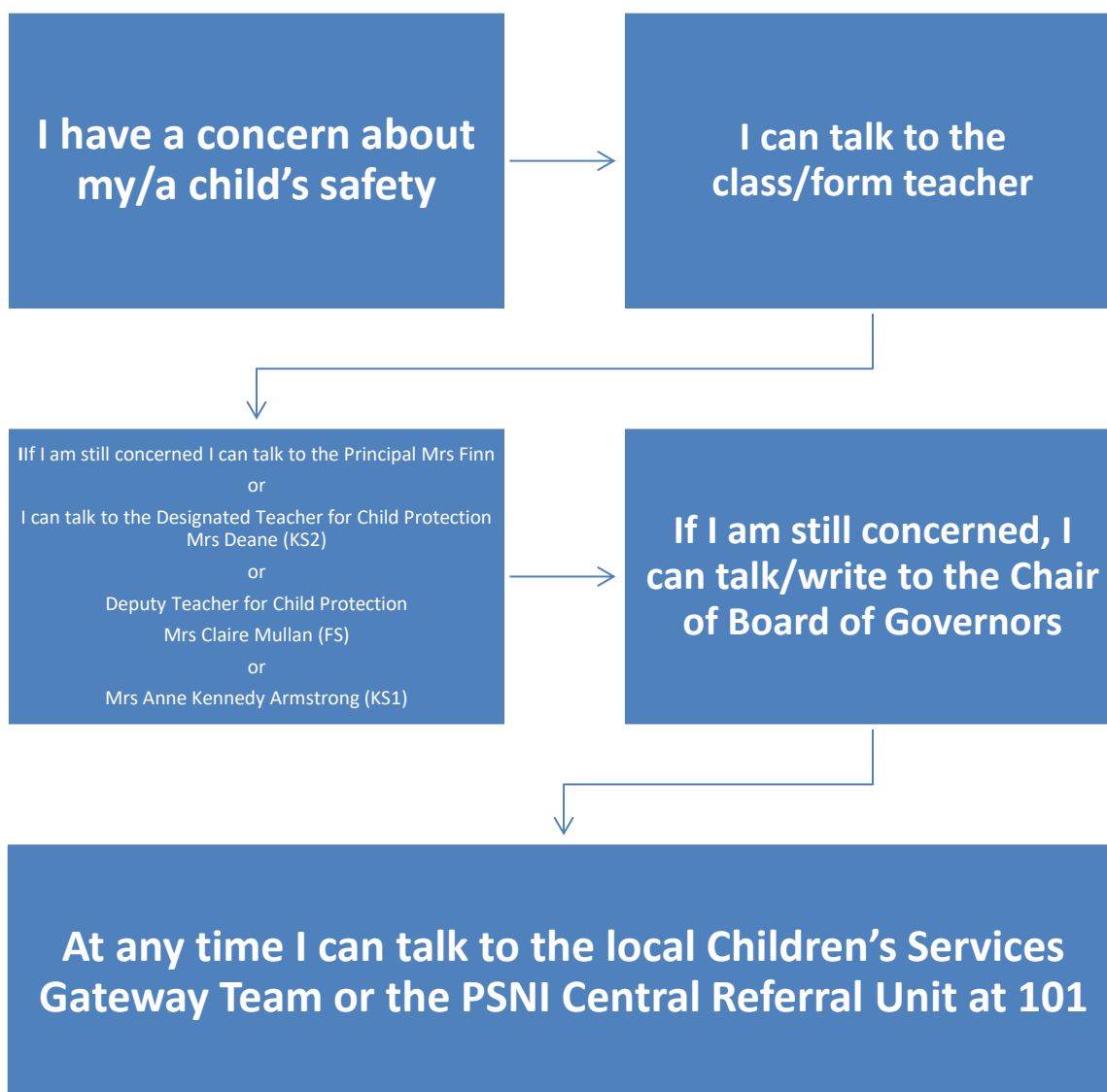
- expect the child to meet their needs
- unrealistic expectations/rigid ideas about child development
- history of mental illness in one or both parents
- history of domestic violence
- drug and alcohol misuse in one or both parents of the child
- frequent changes of carers
- history of aggressive behaviour by either parent
- unplanned pregnancy
- unrealistic expectations of themselves as parents.

### **Home and Environmental Conditions**

- unemployment
- no income/poverty
- poor housing or overcrowded housing
- social isolation and no supportive family
- the family moves frequently
- debt
- large family

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **If a Parent Has a Potential Child Protection Concern Within the School**



If you have escalated your concern as set out in the above flowchart, and are of the view that it has not been addressed satisfactorily, you may revert to the school's complaints policy. This policy should culminate in the option for you to contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) who has the legislative power to investigate your complaint.

If a parent has a concern about a child's safety or suspect child abuse within the local community, it should be brought directly to the attention of the Children's Services Gateway Team.

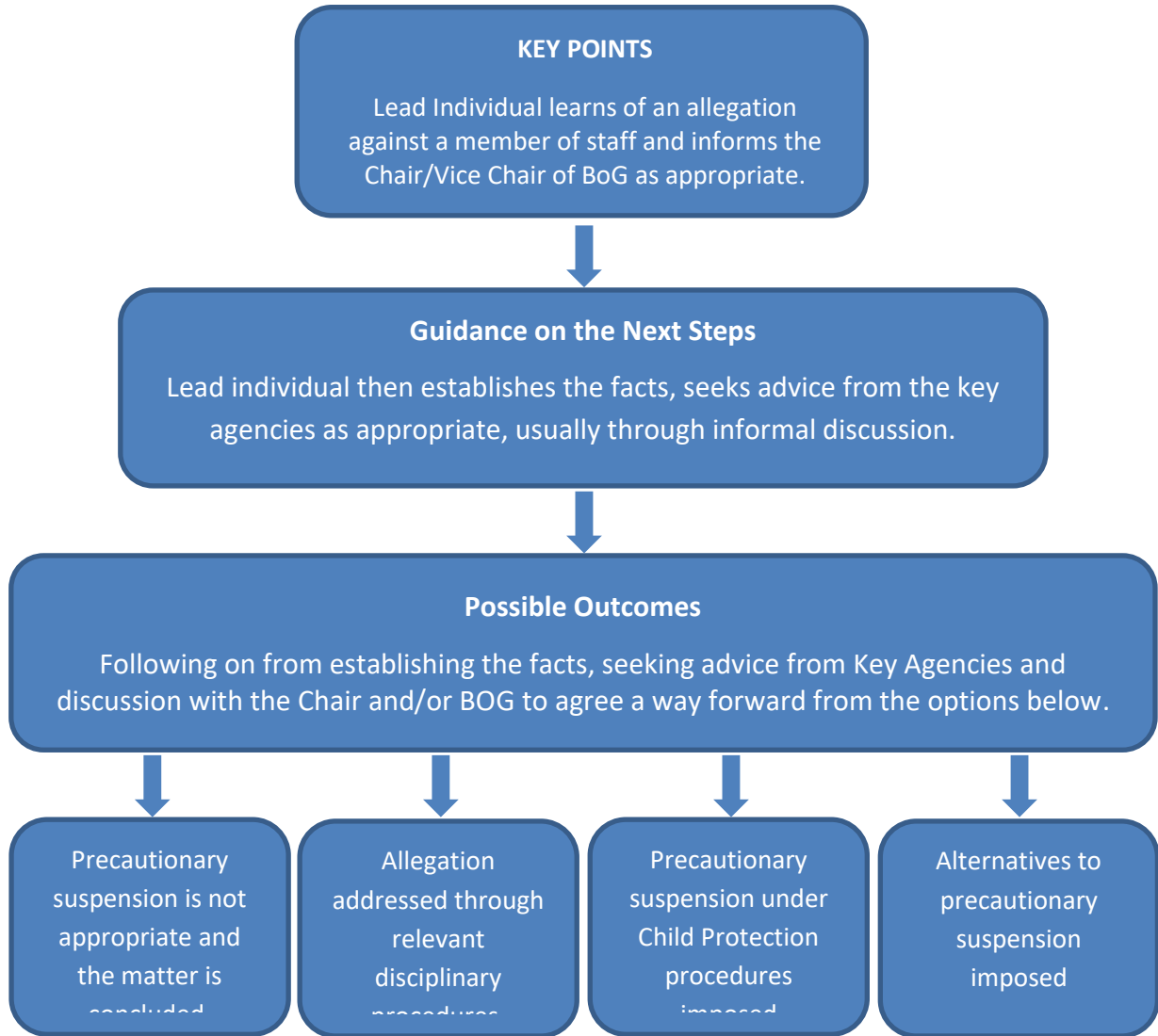
## APPENDIX 6

### Procedure Where the School Has Concerns, or Has Been Given Information, about Possible Abuse by Someone Other Than a Member of Staff



## APPENDIX 7

### Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff



## APPENDIX 8

### Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers in Schools

#### **This Code of Conduct needs to be read in conjunction with our Child Protection Policy.**

Rights Respecting School

*St Michael's Primary school is a 'Rights Respecting School'. We adopt the UN Convention on the rights of the child recognising that all children have the right to be treated with dignity and fairness, to be protected, to develop to their full potential and to participate fully in the life of the school.*

Article 3: 'The best interest of the child must be a top priority in everything we do'.

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interest 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 children in their care must be above reproach. The Code of Conduct is designed to assist staff in respect of the issue of child abuse by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

Rationale

This Code of Conduct sets out clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected from all staff at St Michael's Catholic Primary School. The principles underlying the guidance aim to encourage staff to achieve the highest possible standards of conduct and minimise the risk of inappropriate conduct occurring.

School staff are in a unique position of trust and influence as role models for pupils. Therefore, staff must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all pupils within the school.

Staff also have an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, both inside and outside working hours and work setting.

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers in the school regardless of their position, role or responsibility. References to 'staff' throughout the policy relate to all of the following groups:

- All members of staff including teaching and support staff
- Volunteers, including governors
- Casual workers

- Temporary and supply staff, either from agencies or engaged directly
- Student placements, including those undertaking initial teacher training and apprentices.

**At St Michael's Primary School we aim to:**

- Be a learning community that enables every child to be and to do the very best they can.
- To create a caring family atmosphere that allows this to happen.

**Aims of this Code**

- To outline the principles of good practice in matters of attitude and conduct when dealing with the children in our care
- To help safeguard children from any abuse, whether physical, sexual, emotional or through neglect
- To protect adults working with children from any false allegations

**Therefore, as a staff and employees (whether paid or unpaid) of the school:**

**We will:**

- Treat others equally regardless of ability, gender, age race, sexual orientation or position in School
- Attempt to be good role models for all of our pupils
- Listen to what children and adults have to say and value and respect their opinions
- Address and speak appropriately to, and in front of, children, their families and staff
- Act and dress in a professional manner
- Respect confidentiality of both the individual and organisation as a whole
- Act and promote the good name of the school and protect its good reputation
- Address and refer to both children and adults in an appropriate manner and not discuss school based issues outside of school
- Implement all School policies and procedures** including the Child Protection Policy and Procedures at all times whilst carrying out work related tasks and activities.

**We will never:**

- Engage in rough, physical games, including horseplay with children
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind
- Break confidentiality
- Bring the good name of the school into disrepute
- Talk about the school negatively

As a staff we will not act in a manner inconsistent with the above or in any way that may damage the good name and standing of the school.

Any issues should be immediately discussed with the Principal (or current line manager for Classroom Assistants, teachers and ancillary staff).

We subscribe to good practice in the following areas:

### **Setting an Example**

All staff and volunteers who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils/students. Staff must therefore for example avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times.

All staff and volunteers must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils/students to do the same.

All staff and volunteers must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.

This Code helps all staff and volunteers to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable and regard should also be given to the disciplinary rules set out by the employing authority.

All staff and volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves and comply with all school policies and procedures.

### **Staff and volunteers agree to work within the following guidelines**

Adults will conduct themselves in a professional manner in their relationships with children, including not overstepping the boundaries into personal contacts outside school.

Staff should inform the Principal if they are working with or entertaining children in their own home. (e.g. Tutoring, Birthday Parties etc.)

#### Physical contact with children

Staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils. It is unrealistic and unnecessary to suggest that the staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. A distressed child especially a younger child may need reassurance and comforting.

Do not initiate physical contact (hugs etc)

Do not prolong contact initiated by children

Be sensitive when offering physical comfort to a child, check with the child first if practical

Do not have physical contact with a child if on your own with him or her

Physical punishment is illegal as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour

If a member of staff feels his/her actions have been or may be misconstrued a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal Mrs Finn or in her absence to the Vice Principal Mrs Anne Kennedy Armstrong.

## 2. Intimate Care

- When changing or cleaning a child, 2 people should be present if possible, (with the exception of children who have specific individual care plans)
- If this is not possible, keep an open door policy
- As far as possible, the child should deal with his, her own needs.
- Older pupils may be permitted to deal with the physical care of younger children under the guidance of an adult.
- Children should not be allowed to treat their own or each other's injuries when first aid is being administered
- If you have any concerns about how your actions might be interpreted, report them to the designated person for Child Protection Mrs Claire Deane.

### 3. Seeing Children alone

#### **There will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place.**

- Staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- Where such conditions cannot apply staff should ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It is advisable not to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- Where possible another pupil or preferably another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.
- Always ensure that the pupil has closest access to the door.
- Do not give lifts to individual children unless in an emergency or with specific parental permission.
- Report any concerns to the designated person

#### **Physical contact**

- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm. ( See Policy on the use of reasonable force)
- There should **never** be any physical response to misbehaviour whatever the provocation, this is illegal, except where it is required to maintain the safety of the pupil or that of others. In this event the reasonable force policy should be fully adhered to and the incident reported immediately to the Principal.
- In particular circumstances, such as use of certain areas like the swimming pool we have our own guidelines for these circumstances. Staff stay outside changing rooms and verbally encourage children to change quickly. Staff should only enter changing rooms in the case of an emergency.
- Staff who have to administer first aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.

- Any physical contact, which would be likely to be misinterpreted, by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided. If this does occur the staff member must immediately speak to the Designated teacher/Principal.
- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.
- Where physical contact is required to maintain the safety of the pupil or others around them that safety must take precedence over all other considerations.

### **Physical Restraint**

Staff should follow “The Reasonable Force and Safe Handling Policy” and any training given on how to restrain children

This should only take place if it is necessary in order to

- Protect that child from danger
- Protect another child from danger
- Protect serious damage to property

#### **4. Behaviour of children**

Follow our Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and Anti Bullying Policy Guidelines

- Shouting, screaming or swearing at children is not permitted.
- Complaints are always addressed to children’s behaviour, not character.

#### **5. Choice and use of Teaching Material**

- Always ensure teaching materials are age appropriate and suitable for the pupils.
- Parents will be informed and consulted re the use of the Education for Love programme and the sex education programme.

### **6. Use of Internet and Mobile Technology**

Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the schools’ E-Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy at all times both inside and outside of work.

- If staff take images of children on their mobile phones, these should be uploaded to the school website and deleted from phone memory as soon as possible.
- Internet searches and school based email should be used appropriately for a school setting.
- Parental General Policy should be completed by parents to enable using the use of images of children for school purposes.
- Teachers should use admin staff to contact parents. Please do not use own mobiles nor email addresses. If you wish to send an email wording to admin staff who will forward the message.

It is **strongly recommended** that members of staff do not allow pupils to have access to their personal mobile phone numbers/devices or to their personal and school email addresses. All electronic communications with pupils should be via the official school emailing system [info@stmichaels.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stmichaels.belfast.ni.sch.uk) . Mobile phones **must never** be used during teaching time.

### **7. Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism**

- Any individual gifts to children should only happen with the agreement of the Principal and Parent.
- Staff may accept “Thank You” gifts from parents.
- Staff must not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.
- Methods of selection and exclusion should always be subject to clear, agreed criteria.

### **Safeguarding Pupils**

All staff and volunteers have a duty to safeguard pupils/students from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The duty to safeguard pupils/students includes the duty to report concerns about a pupil/student or colleague to a member of the school’s Safeguarding team (Designated Teacher (DT)/Deputy Designated Teacher (DDT) for Child Protection or the Principal).

The school’s DT is Mrs C Deane and the DDTs are Mrs Owens and Miss Mullan. The safe guarding team is made of the above and the Principal is informed regularly by the DT. The Safeguarding Governor is Mrs Pauline Hegney.

Any concerns about the behaviours or conduct of any member of staff should be reported to the Principal immediately or in the case of a child protection matter to the DT.

All staff and volunteers are provided with personal copies of the school’s Child Protection Policy and must be familiar with these documents and other relevant school policies eg e-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy.

All staff and volunteers should treat children and others with respect and dignity. **They must not demean or undermine pupils, their parents, carers or colleagues in any way.**

All staff and volunteers should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as sarcasm, making jokes at the expense of students or others, embarrassing or humiliating students, discriminating against or favouring students.

All staff and volunteers must take reasonable care of pupils/students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare. Staff should also complete risk assessments where appropriate in accordance with school. Pupils should NOT be left unattended. During teaching time teachers and staff must be in their class unless for exceptional circumstances.

### **Relationships with Pupils**

All staff and volunteers must declare any relationships that they may have with pupils/students outside of school; this may include mutual membership of social groups, tutoring, or family connections. Staff and volunteers should not assume that the school are aware of any such connections.

Relationships with students must be professional at all times, sexual relationships with students are not permitted and may lead to an abuse of trust and criminal conviction.

### **Verbal Interaction**

All verbal exchange in school shall be conducted in a calm and professional manner. During school time staff should address other staff and parents as Mr, Miss, Mrs and never by their first names in front of children. Only in unusual circumstances, for example in emergency situations or when attracting attention in large areas, should voices be raised. Sarcastic, threatening or demeaning verbal interaction is not acceptable. Staff must not discuss children in a negative manner. The use of humour can be helpful in diffusing situations but the humour used must be understood and appropriate

### **Pupil Development**

All staff and volunteers must comply with school policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of pupils and staff and the smooth operation of the school.

All staff and volunteers must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils.

### **Honesty and Integrity**

All staff and volunteers must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities. Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school must be declared to the Principal with the exception of "one off" token gifts from students or parents. Personal gifts from individual members of staff or volunteers to students are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted and may lead to disciplinary action.

### **Conduct Outside of Work**

All staff and volunteers must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school or the staff/ volunteers own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.

In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are to be regarded as unacceptable.

Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school. It should not contravene the working time regulations

or affect an individual's work performance in the school. Staff should seek advice from the Principal when considering work outside the school.

### **Social Networking**

Social Networking Sites present particular difficulties for staff in all schools. Great care must be taken to ensure that appropriate boundaries are maintained between staff, parents and pupils at all times. It is **strongly recommended** that no member of our staff communicate with pupils or parents via social networking sites, at any time. Information directly related to the school community must never be posted on personal social networking sites. Staff should also be mindful of content attributable to them, posted on others sites (eg. friends and family) who may not have the privacy settings recommended. Any attempt by parents or pupils to communicate with staff in this way must immediately be brought to the attention of the Principal and Designated Teacher.

### **Confidentiality**

Members of staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about students in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal information about a student or his family for their own, or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the student. This information must never be shared outside of school.

Paperwork relating to pupils must be kept safe at all times. See Privacy Policy.

Confidential information about students should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need to know basis. In circumstances where the student's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a student, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.

If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential he or she should seek guidance from firstly the Principal or in their absence a senior member of staff. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to senior leadership.

Adults need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support students, they must not promise confidentiality or request students to do the same under any circumstances. ( See Child Protection Policy)

Additionally, concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to a senior leader without delay.

### **Dress and Appearance**

ALL staff are expected to adhere to the following school dress code.

All staff and volunteers must dress in a manner that is appropriate to a professional role and promoting a professional image. Blue jeans or shorts are not permitted. PE gear should be worn at PE times only. ALL staff are expected to dress professionally at all times.

Staff and volunteers should dress in a manner that is not offensive, revealing or sexually provocative. This includes wearing clothes of a revealing nature.

Staff and volunteers should dress in a manner that is absent from political or other contentious slogans.

### **Choices and Use of Teaching Materials**

Staff should avoid teaching material, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a staff should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised.

Schools have already received advice on the value of consulting parents and Governors when proposing to use materials in connection with sex education programmes.

If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the principal before using it.

It is inevitable that some of our teaching will involve the use of sensitive materials and it is very difficult to anticipate when these might impact negatively on our pupils. If the material to be used is very contentious, and if there are concerns about any pupils in a class in relation to it, it is good practice to always consult with the Principal.

**Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal or in their absence the designated teacher.**

Failure to abide by the Staff Code of Conduct may result in Disciplinary Action.

### **13 Monitoring of the Code of Conduct**

The monitoring of the actions described in the Code of Conduct is the responsibility of all staff. Any breaches of the Code must be reported according to the Safeguarding Procedures

and to the Principal. The matter will then be dealt with according to Safeguarding Procedures or the Disciplinary Procedures.

The governors, via the Principal, will monitor the Staff Code of Conduct, in order to ensure that all it is consistently applied.

Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy will be made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed.

Staff absences from supervision duty

Pupils should be supervised at all times by an adult.

If you are unable to be on time for supervision duty please arrange for another member of staff to cover for you.

If you are unable to attend school please telephone the Principal and if unavailable the a senior teacher.

**Mrs Bronagh Finn 078 7565 7325**

**Mrs Claire Deane 07968582615**

**Miss Mullan 07881426966**

It would be appreciated where possible that notice could be given the previous evening to allow time for a substitute teacher to be arranged. On return to school after sick leave absence it is the responsibility of the teacher to report to the Principal.