



METHODIST COLLEGE BELFAST PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT

CHILD PROTECTION POLICYⁱ

SECTION A: CODE OF PRACTICE

I Introduction

- (i) In Methodist College Preparatory Department both students and staff are valued and respected as individuals and they are encouraged to develop their unique talents and abilities to their full potential. We seek to create a safe, caring, positive and supportive environment in which pupils have the right to be heard and see staff and volunteers as approachable people who will listen to their concerns about issues inside and outside school and take them seriously.

The Governors and staff of the Prep Dept. recognise the contribution they can make to safeguarding children. They acknowledge that all staff and volunteers have a full and active part in protecting pupils from harm. **Child abuse is completely unacceptable and may also be a criminal offence.**

- (ii) In *The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995* it is clear that “*the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration*” in all decisions concerning a child: this overrides all other considerations. Article 3 of *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* states “*In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public, private social welfare institutions, courts, administrative authorities legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration.*”
- (iii) This policy is also informed by the guidance and procedures set out by Department of Education *Pastoral Care in School: Child Protection (1999)*, *Co-Operating to Safeguard Children (2003)*, *the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) Regional Policy and Procedures (2005)*, *Co-operating To Safeguard Children And Young People in Northern Ireland (2016)* and *Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools (2019)*

- (iv) The policy applies to all Governors, staff and volunteers and it ensures all adults have clear guidance on the action to be taken where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected or disclosed. The issue of child abuse is not ignored by anyone who works in the Prep Dept. If a member of staff or volunteer becomes aware of a pupil who may be suffering abuse, then that member of staff or volunteer follows the procedure detailed in Section B to ensure that the matter is addressed fully.
- (v) Everyone in the Preparatory Department has a responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. However, within the school there are key personnel who are delegated with specific responsibility for child protection. Their roles are listed later in this document.
- (vi) As part of the preventative curriculum, the Prep Dept. helps pupils to recognise unwelcome and unacceptable behaviour in others, to understand appropriate boundaries and to acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe. It is made clear that pupils have the right to be treated properly by others and they are reminded of their responsibility to treat other people with respect.

II Safeguarding Team

Chair of the Board of Governors	Rev. Dr. J. Unsworth
Designated Governor for Child Protection	Mr. J. Lowry
Principal	Mrs. J. Lendrum
Designated Teacher for Child Protection	Mrs. A. Kennedy (MCB)
Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection	Mrs. A. Logan (MCB)
Head of Preparatory Department	Ms T. Hamilton
Designated Teacher for Child Protection (FH)	Mr. C. Allen
Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection (FH)	Mrs. D. Allen
Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DH)	Mrs. A. Cunningham
Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DH)	Mrs. C. Booth

III Definition of Abuse

Child Abuse occurs when *'a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely by a stranger.'* (ACPC, 2005)

A child is a person under the age of eighteen years as defined in *The Children (NI) Order 1995*. This policy also applies to vulnerable adults who are registered in the school to the end of their nineteenth year.

IV Types of Abuse

Child abuse is covered under four categories in *Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People (DHSSPS 2016)* and in *ACPC (2005)*.

Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful neglect, failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour (*ACPC 2005*).

Possible signs or symptoms of physical abuse include:

- unexplained bruises (in places difficult to mark)
- human bite marks, welts or bald spots
- unexplained lacerations, fractures or abrasions
- untreated injuries
- self destructive tendencies
- chronic runaway
- fear of going home.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as he meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse. (*ACPC, 2005*). Emotional abuse may involve bullying behaviour – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers. (*Co-operating To Safeguard Children And Young People, DHSSPS 2016*). The school's E-Safety Policy is set out in a separate document.

Possible signs or symptoms of emotional abuse include:

- bullying behaviour of others
- change in personality from outgoing to withdrawn
- difficulty in forming/maintaining relationships with others
- depression
- signs of mutilation
- attention seeking
- chronic runaway
- wetting and soiling
- sudden speech disorders
- low self-esteem.

Sexual Abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. It 'involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children to look at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.' (*ACPC 2005*). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males, women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Possible signs or symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- bruised or sore genitals
- genital infection
- difficulty in walking or sitting
- inappropriate sexualized language or behaviour
- low self-esteem
- chronic depression
- substance abuse
- personality changes
- fear of going home.

Child sexual exploitation 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.

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 including:

- child labour
- slavery
- servitude
- 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. (*Co-operating To Safeguard Children And Young People, DHSSPS 2016*).

**Although exploitation is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register teachers should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children can be categorised within the existing framework of categories.*

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (*ACPC 2005*).

There are six categories of neglect-

Physical – possible signs may include:

- poor personal hygiene – hair, clothes, skin
- pale or sallow complexion
- body odours
- poorly fitting or inadequate clothing or footwear
- poor standard of hygiene or safety at home
- inadequate sleeping arrangements
- lack of stairgate/fireguard etc
- no uniform
- regular hunger
- collected from school and or/looked after at home by range of different people who may be inappropriate carers or lack maturity to keep the child safe
- problems caused by pets that are uncared for and possibly a risk
- exposure to drugs and drug related equipment and/or alcohol
- exposure to prescription medication (such as anti-depressants)
- prone to illness and infection.

Medical – possible signs may include:

- dental and/or medical appointments missed, or never made
- optical, auditory, speech and language, or therapy advice not adhered to or appointments missed
- advice from or request to meet school nurse ignored
- head lice uncontrolled
- vaccinations not completed
- over/under- administration of prescribed medication
- poor understanding or medical needs arising from disability.

Emotional – possible signs may include:

- lack of concern for the child's feelings
- never giving praise
- constant belittling or bullying behaviour
- lack of stimulation
- inconsistent attention – loving/aggressive
- failure to understand how the other types of neglect affect the child's sense of worth
- no sense of belonging to the family
- erratic and unpredictable parenting
- poor attachments
- threats, rejection or frightening behaviour from parents.

Educational – possible signs may include:

- no lesson equipment or constantly lost
- no PE kit
- indifference to child's academic performance – never or rarely attend parents'

evenings

- no response to requests for meetings or to return telephone calls
- regular unexplained and unauthorised absence
- little support to complete homework
- home/school contact book never completed/often lost
- lack of understanding or concern for child's disability or SEN
- child missing school/unable to concentrate due to caring responsibilities at home
- permitting regular truanting.

Nutritional – possible signs may include:

- regular inadequate/poor – quality packed lunch
- unhealthy diet
- complete absence of exercise
- concerns about the child's weight – very underweight or very overweight
- child regularly having to make their own meals (and possibly siblings) due to the incapacity or unavailability of the parent
- lack of food or cooking equipment at home.

Lack of supervision and guidance – possible signs may include:

- few boundaries at home – no rules to follow
- child out alone at times/in places inappropriate to their age or maturity
- use of inadequate or inappropriate carers
- antisocial behaviour and vandalism
- repeated involvement of police
- exposure to dangerous people
- encouraged into crime.

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

Bullying behaviour is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in Methodist College Prep Dept. The Pastoral Care Policy is set out in a separate document. Staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying behaviour occurring, and take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the pupil who is being bullied and to deal appropriately with the pupil displaying bullying behaviour. The situation is monitored until staff are sure the problem has stopped.

Domestic Violence

It is now recognised that children who live in an atmosphere of domestic violence may be at risk. Domestic violence is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional.

Symptoms which young people may display and which are indicators only include:

- Nervousness
- Low self-worth
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Nightmares / flashbacks
- Physiological – stress / nerves
- Stomach pain
- Bed wetting
- Immature / needy behaviour
- Temper tantrums
- Aggression
- Internalising distress or withdrawal
- Truancy
- Alcohol and drugs
- Bullying behaviour.

These symptoms can lead to a child/ young person being misdiagnosed as having an illness, learning difficulties, or being naughty or disruptive.

If it comes to the attention of school staff that domestic abuse is or may be a factor for a child/young person this must be passed to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information to Social Services

We will take seriously any concerns which are raised about a pupil in our school who has self-harmed and/or has expressed suicidal thoughts.

The Designated/Deputy Designated teacher will immediately follow the school's child protection procedures.

Female Genital Mutilation

Under the, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education,' published in April 2014, schools must ensure that staff are aware of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Female Genital Mutilation occurs mainly in Africa and to a lesser extent, in the Middle East and Asia. Although it is believed by many to be a religious issue, it is a cultural practice. There are no health benefits.

Communities particularly affected by FGM in the UK include girls from: Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria, Eritrea, Yemen, Indonesia and Afghanistan.

In the UK, FGM tends to occur in areas with larger populations of communities who practice FGM, such as first-generation immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Key Points:

- Not a religious practice
- Occurs mostly to girls aged from 5 – 8 years old; but up to around 15
- Criminal offence in UK since 1985

- Offence since 2003 to take girls abroad
- Criminal penalties include up to 14 years in prison.

Reasons for this cultural practice include:

- Cultural identity – an initiation into womanhood
- Gender Identity – moving from girl to woman – enhancing femininity
- Sexual control – reduce the woman’s desire for sex
- Hygiene/cleanliness – un mutilated women are regarded as unclean.

Risk Factors include:

- low level of integration into UK society
- mother or sister who has undergone FGM
- girls who are withdrawn from PSHE
- a visiting female elder from the country of origin
- being taken on a long holiday to the family’s country of origin
- talk about a ‘special’ event or procedure to ‘become a woman.’

High Risk Time

Staff should be made aware that this procedure often takes place in the summer, as the recovery period after FGM can be six to nine weeks. They should be alert to the possibility of FGM as a reason why a girl in a high risk group is absent from school or where the family request an ‘authorised absence’ for just before or just after the summer school holidays.

Although, it is difficult to identify girls before FGM takes place, where girls from these high risk groups return from a long period of absence with symptoms of FGM, the school will seek advice from social services.

Post-FGM Symptoms may include:

- difficulty walking, sitting or standing
- spend longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet
- unusual behaviour after a lengthy absence
- reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations
- asking for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.

Longer Term problems may include:

- difficulties urinating or incontinence
- frequent or chronic vaginal, pelvic or urinary infections
- menstrual problems
- kidney damage and possible failure
- cysts and abscesses
- pain when having sex
- infertility

- complications during pregnancy and childbirth
- emotional and mental health problems.

If it comes to the attention of school staff that a child/young person may be at risk of FGM or is showing the signs of it, the information must be passed to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with Social Services

V Role of the Board of Governors and the Designated Governor for Child Protection

- (i) The Board of Governors recognises the responsibility placed on it by *The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003* and the information in the *School Governors Handbook Child Protection 2007*.
- (ii) The Board of Governors reviews annually the Child Protection structures and procedures in the College and Prep Dept and The Child Protection Policy using the guidance outlined in the documents listed in Appendix 1.
- (iii) The Board of Governors tasks the Head of Department with designating a member of staff to have specific responsibility for Child Protection and he also appoints a Deputy. In this document the teachers are referred to as the Designated Teacher and the Deputy Designated Teacher.
- (iv) The Board of Governors ensures that the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Designated Governor for Child Protection receive appropriate and up-to-date Child Protection training commissioned or provided by the Belfast Education and Library Board, with refresher training at least once every three years. It also ensures that the Designated Teacher and his Deputy receive regular training to update their knowledge in this area and that child protection training is given to all staff and volunteers annually.
- (v) At least one Governor sitting on interview and appointment panels has received Strand 3: Recruitment and Selection Training (EA).
- (vi) The Board of Governors tasks the Head of Department with ensuring parents/guardians have access to a copy of the Child Protection Policy and complaints procedure.
- (vii) Each year parents are advised of the name of the Designated Governor for Child Protection so that they may consult him on a Child Protection matter if desired. If such a matter is raised, he informs the Head of Department (unless the Head of Department is implicated, in which case he advises the Chair of the Board or Governors) and they follow the procedure detailed in **Section B** of this document.
- (viii) In the event of a Child Protection complaint being made against the Head of Department, the Principal/Chair of the Board of Governors assumes the lead for managing the allegations.
- (ix) The Designated Governor for Child Protection inducts the members of the Board of

Governors in Child Protection. A roll of attendees is kept. New members of the Board are given a copy of *School Governors Handbook Child Protection* (CPPS, DENI 2007) and given awareness training.

VI Role of the Head of Department

- (i) The Head of Department designates a member of staff to have specific responsibility for Child Protection and he also appoints a Deputy.
- (ii) The Head of Department ensures all staff and volunteers are vetted.
- (iii) The Head of Department notifies the Principal of the College of child protection referrals to Social Services and/or the PSNI.
- (iv) The Head of Department gives reports to the Principal of the College regarding any child protection matters as they arise and, also, termly updates. In addition, a full annual Child Protection report is given to the Board of Governors.
- (v) The Head of Department takes the lead when a complaint is made against a member of staff or volunteer. If the Designated Teacher is the subject of the complaint the Head of Department takes over his/her role.
- (vi) The Head of Department ensures that all parents, pupils, staff and volunteers know who the Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher are and how they can be contacted. If a parent prefers to contact another member of staff, that member of staff must follow the relevant procedures.
- (vii) The Head of Department ensures that parents/guardians are issued with a copy of the Child Protection Policy and complaints procedure every two years.

VII Role of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection

- (i) The Designated Teacher for Child Protection trains all new staff and volunteers, updates the training of current staff and volunteers annually and is available to discuss child protection concerns with them. He/she maintains a record of attendance at training.
- (ii) He/she takes the lead responsibility for developing the College's Child Protection Policy and promoting an ethos of safeguarding in the school.
- (iii) He/she keeps the Head of Department informed of child protection issues, liaises with Designated Teacher for Child Protection in MCB, EA (Belfast Branch) Designated Officers for Child Protection and makes referrals to social services and /or PSNI as appropriate.
- (iv) He/she maintains records in accordance with DENI guidance on child protection issues and produces written reports for the Board of Governors.

- (v) When the Designated Teacher is not available, the Deputy Designated Teacher will have responsibility for child protection.
- (vi) The Designated Teacher follows the procedures in **Section B**.

SECTION B: PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING, RECORDING AND REPORTING SUSPECTED OR DISCLOSED CHILD ABUSE

I. Introduction

In all cases of abuse or suspected abuse, the member of staff or volunteer immediately informs the Designated Teacher of his or her concerns. The informing teacher follows the procedures detailed later in this section on recording and reporting. It is then the responsibility of the Designated Teacher to pursue the matter in accordance with Prep Dept. policy.

Note:

Neither the informing staff nor the Designated Teacher for Child Protection investigates. This is a matter for Social Services and/or the PSNI. There is the possibility of legal proceedings in such cases and, therefore, staff remain impartial and professional throughout. Members of staff seek advice from the Head of Department or the Designated Teacher if they have any concerns about the correct procedure.

II Abuse or Suspected Abuse is Disclosed to a Member of Staff or Volunteer by a Pupil

- (i) If a pupil makes a disclosure of abuse, the member of staff or volunteer follows the procedure set down in ***The Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers*** for interviews in which a pupil asks to speak in private. They explain that he or she wishes to help but cannot assure the pupil of total confidentiality as it may be necessary to seek advice and pass on information. It is explained that any information is treated as sensitively as possible and only those who need to know are informed, in the best interests of the pupil.
- (ii) Staff or volunteers listen to the pupil, accept what he/she is saying without judgement, or displaying shock or disbelief, do not ask leading questions and do not suggest a reason for what has happened or criticise the perpetrator. Staff and volunteers do not investigate the issue. If it is felt that some questions are needed in order to clarify the matter, open questions are used to establish the facts. Unless revealed, they do not ask who, what etc. A pupil is not pressed for information the child does not want to give. Closed questions and questioning beyond what the pupil volunteers without prompting can jeopardise a subsequent court case. This is the role of partner agencies.
- (iii) Staff and volunteers reassure the pupil that he/she has done the right thing in talking about the matter. They do not make promises e.g. everything will be all right. They explain what they will do next i.e. talk to the Designated Teacher.

- (iv) They make sure that the pupil is safe. If there is any concern about the immediate welfare of the pupil, the member of staff or volunteer ensures that the pupil is in the care of a responsible person. This may, for example, involve taking him or her to the School Office if in a distressed state.
- (v) Immediately after disclosure by a pupil the member of staff or volunteer makes a written note of the details given by the child. The notes are factual and accurate and any reference to the abuse or to the abuser is recorded as far as possible in the actual words used by the pupil. The member of staff or volunteer does not express opinions but notes the demeanour and physical state of the child and notes when and where the disclosure took place.
- (vi) The member of staff or volunteer reports the matter within the same working day to the Designated Teacher (or, in his absence, the Deputy Designated Teacher) and notes when and where this took place. He or she hands over a written report of the disclosure, signed and dated. The Designated Teacher keeps them securely in Child Protection cabinet so no copies are required by the informing staff. The Designated Teacher, in consultation with the Head of Department, decides on the next step.

III Abuse or Suspected Abuse Disclosed to a Member of Staff or Volunteer by a Third Party

- (i) On becoming aware of information about the possible abuse of a pupil the member of staff or volunteer does not express opinions, but makes a written note of when and where the disclosure took place, and records as far as possible the disclosure in the actual words used by the third party. Staff or volunteers do not ask for a written account.
- (ii) The member of staff or volunteer reports the matter immediately to the Designated Teacher (or, in their absence to the Deputy) and hands over a written account of the disclosure, signed and dated.

IV Abuse or Suspected Abuse by a Member of Staff or Volunteer

It is a serious matter if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff or volunteer. The Head of Department (or, in his absence, the Deputy Head of Department) is informed immediately, unless the complaint is against the Head of Department in which case the Principal is informed. The Principal (or the Chairman of the Board of Governors if the complaint is against the Principal) ensures that any such complaint is thoroughly clarified by means of the normal Child Protection procedures and the Chairman of the Board of Governors is informed immediately. Preliminary steps are carried out with an open mind. **However, the prime consideration is the protection of the pupils** in the school and the Principal and/or Chairman of the Board of Governors take all necessary steps to ensure this. Where the matter is referred to Social Services and/or the PSNI, the member of staff or volunteer can be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils or staff and may be suspended from duties as a precautionary measure pending further investigation. (See Disciplinary Policy and Procedures)

V Action to be taken by the Designated Teacher following an incident of suspected or disclosed child abuse.

- (i) As soon as the Designated Teacher becomes aware of a possible case of child abuse, he/she asks for the notes made by the staff or volunteer reporting it. If the report is verbal, he /she asks the staff concerned to write down the information.
- (ii) The Designated Teacher meets with the Head of Department (or the Designated Teacher of Child Protection (MCB) if the Head of Department is not available) as a matter of urgency. They consider the situation and plan a course of action, ensuring that a written record of all decisions is made at each step of the process. The Designated Teacher may consult with the EA Child Protection Support Service's Designated Officer for Child Protection.
- (iii) Suspected or alleged abuse is referred to Social Services by the Designated Teacher, using the regional UNOCINI form, within twenty four hours of the initial referral to Social Services. Where physical or sexual abuse is suspected or alleged, the case is referred to the PSNI. In some cases, the Head of Department makes the referral personally but in either situation, the Principal is informed of the matter and of subsequent developments. The Designated Teacher informs EA's Designated Officer for Child Protection of the referral.
- (iv) Unless there are concerns that the parent/guardian may be the possible abuser, the parent/guardian is informed as soon as possible of the course of action to be taken, by the Designated Teacher or the Head of Department, normally before the referral. However, the referral is not delayed if the parent/guardian cannot be contacted. If the parent/guardian does not agree with the referral, the latter proceeds as the protection of the child is paramount. In some circumstances it may not be in the child's interests to inform the parent/guardian immediately. In such a situation, at the time of referral, the Designated Teacher clarifies with the investigating agencies when, how and by whom the parents and the pupil are told that a referral has been made. The Principal is contacted and informed of the reasons for the decision.
- (v) The Head of Department and the Designated Teacher meet as often as necessary to review the situation and to ensure that all possible steps are taken to safeguard the welfare of the pupil, recording all decisions made. The Designated Teacher or the Head of Department keeps those people who need to know informed of developments, subject to the requirement that the welfare of the child is paramount and legal constraints.
- (vi) A written account of all proceedings connected to the case, timed and dated, is made by the Designated Teacher and kept in the Child Protection cabinet. If a member of staff or volunteer is implicated in the proceedings, then an extra copy of the documentation is placed in that individual's personal file.

VI Supporting Pupils in the College

- (i) The Designated Teacher works with external agencies to ensure that appropriate support is provided for a pupil who has suffered abuse.

(ii) Staff help all pupils to develop skills in self protection and develop confidence through:

- The content of the curriculum, particularly the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Programme
- The school ethos, which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued
- Discussion in Circle Time of personal, class or school issues
- The Prep's Positive Behaviour policy, which is aimed at supporting pupils in the school. The school ensures that pupils understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards themselves and others
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as Social Services, Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychologists, police and the school nurse.

VII Information to Pupils and Parents

- (i) At the beginning of the academic year, the Head of Department speaks to the pupils in the school re issues eg bullying behaviour etc and who they can talk to. He or she also explains that while a specific teacher may have responsibility for Pastoral Care in the school there may be occasions when a pupil may prefer to speak to their own teacher or any other member of Staff if they are experiencing personal difficulties. Posters outlining the Pastoral and Child Protection Teams are displayed in prominent positions around the Prep Dept.
- (ii) Each academic year, parents receive information about the members of the Pastoral and Child Protection Team and they receive guidance detailing the most suitable person to contact in particular instances. Parents are advised each year that a formal procedure exists and will be followed if a Child Protection matter arises. A summary of the Child Protection Policy is issued every year. The full policy is available on the College website and on request from the Office.

VIII Operation Encompass

Methodist College Preparatory Department is an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and schools, 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, as required, 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.

VIII Conduct of Staff and Volunteers

- (i) Staff and volunteers have a duty of care to pupils and a responsibility to pass on information and concerns about a pupil's welfare, no matter how small, to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. Staff and volunteers make no assumptions that someone else is aware of a concern.
- (ii) It is important that members of staff and volunteers are totally professional in their dealings with pupils at all times, including non-classroom situations: for example, on school trips, taking extra-curricular activities and when coaching school games. Guidance for staff and volunteers is provided in a separate document entitled *A Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers*. Each member of staff and volunteer receives a copy of this document.

IX Recruitment and Vetting Procedures of Staff and Volunteers

- (i) Pre-employment enhanced disclosure checks are carried out on all staff employed in the College, through Access NI. References are taken up on all new staff.
- (ii) The College uses volunteers from time to time in its work. If it is envisaged that the volunteer could be in contact with pupils with no member of staff present, then that person is required to have an enhanced disclosure check carried out through Access NI.
- (iii) New members of staff and volunteers receive appropriate induction Child Protection training, a copy of the Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct for Staff. All staff and volunteers receive refresher training every year.
- (iv) The Director of Services takes all reasonable steps to ensure that any outside contractors satisfy the requirements of the Prep Dept. in this area.

X Management of Records

Child Protection information is kept securely in the locked Child Protection cabinet in school. The cabinet contains details of all the cases which have involved pupils in the College. It may be accessed by the Designated Governors for Child Protection, the Principal and the Designated Teacher. The guidance laid down on the retention of records is followed.

XI Policy Review

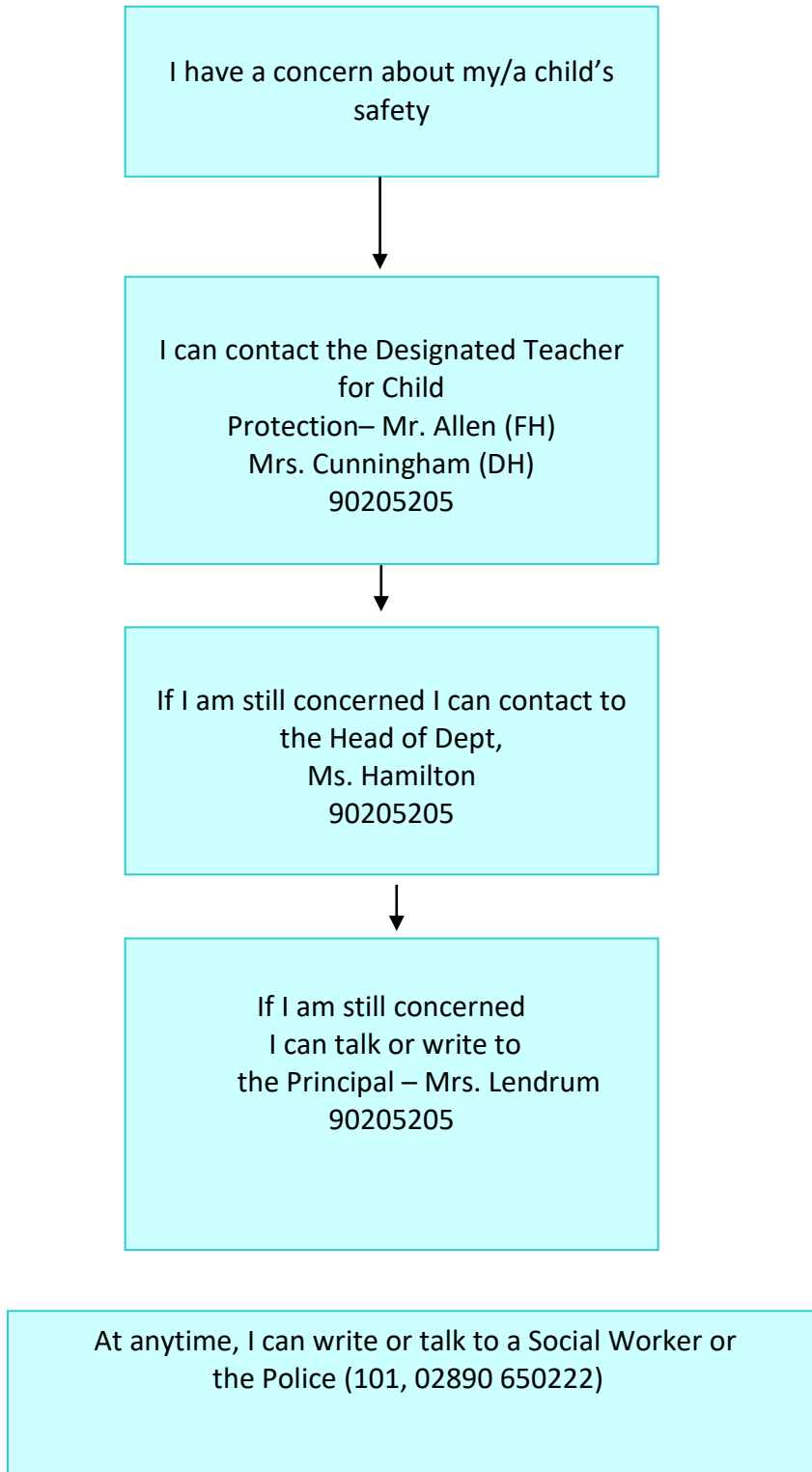
The Designated Teacher conducts a formal review of the Child Protection Policy annually. This is done in consultation with the Chairman of the Board, the Designated Governor and the Head of Department. The revised policy is discussed with the Senior Leadership Team before being presented to the Education Committee and the Board of Governors for consideration.

The views of parents and pupils are welcomed at any time and are normally directed to the Designated Teacher.

Chairman of Board of Governors: _____ Date: _____

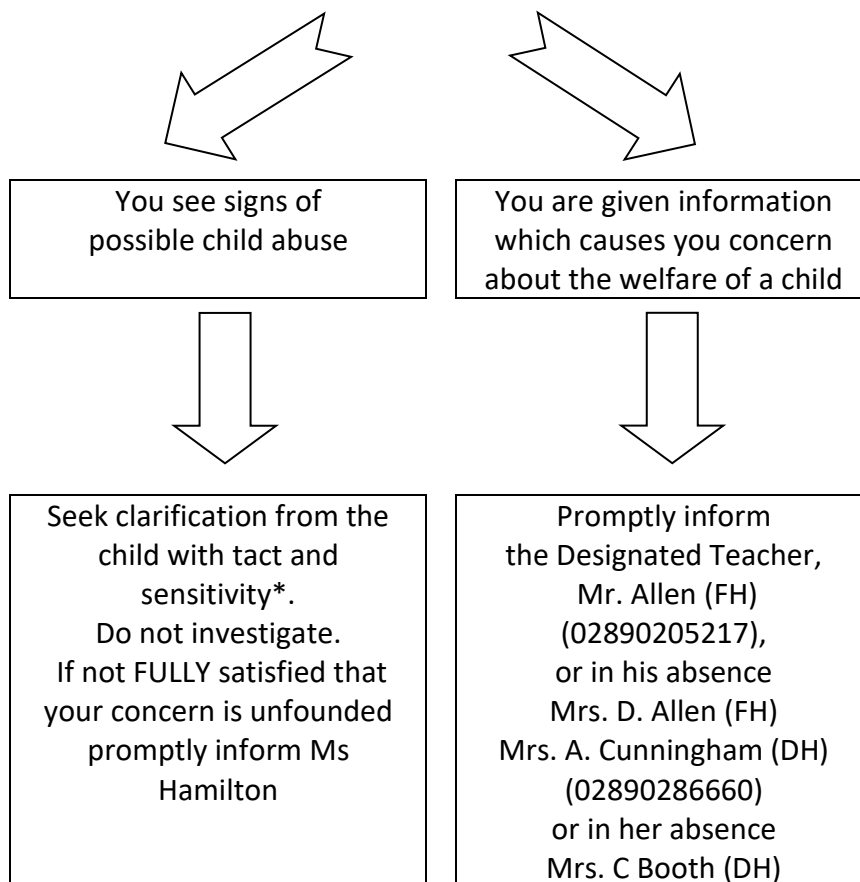
How a parent/guardian can raise a safe guarding/ child protection concern

If a parent/guardian has a child protection concern they can follow the guide below:



Summary of Child Protection Guidelines for Staff

IF



Ms Hamilton will inform Mrs. Lendrum

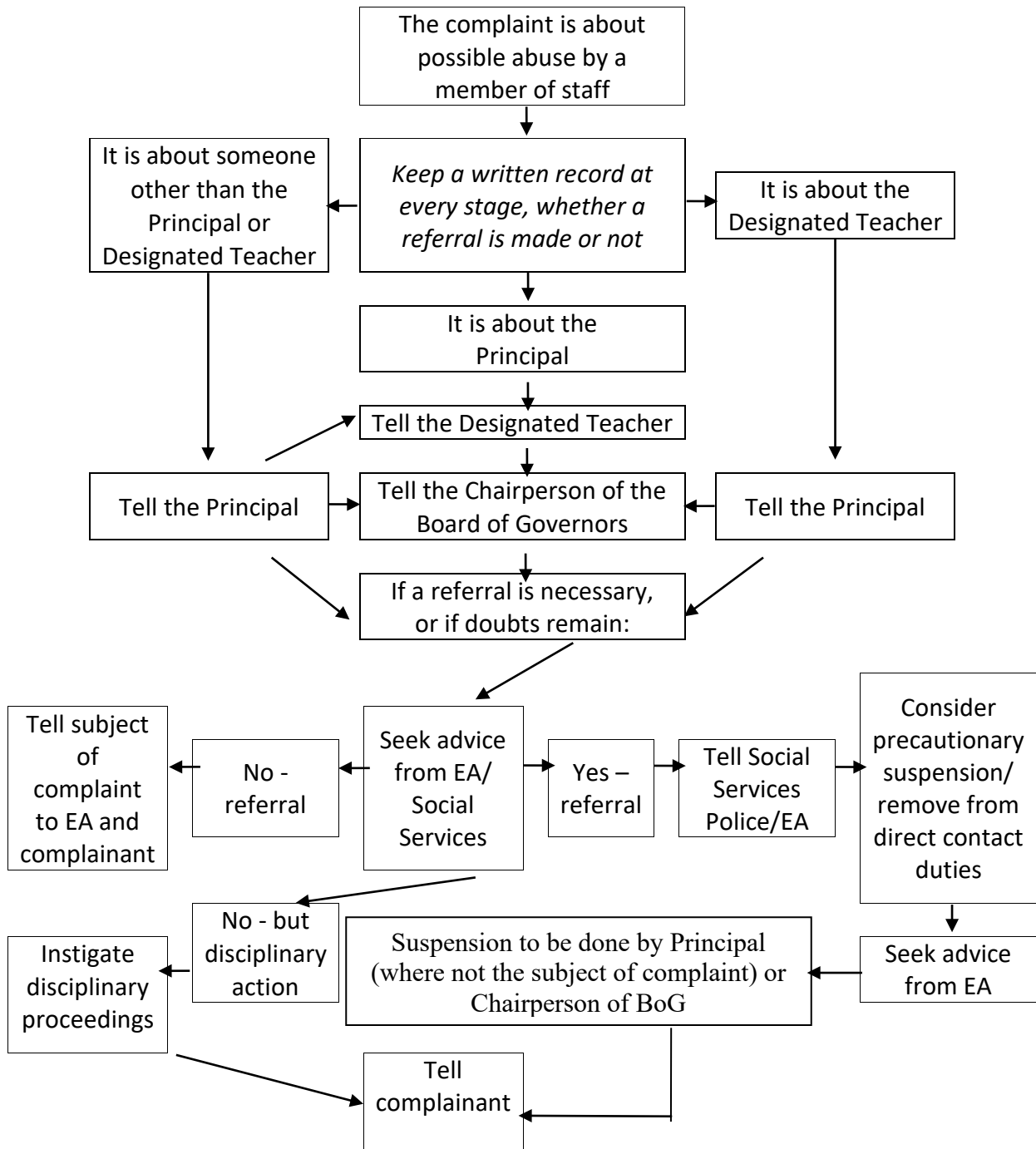
*Whilst discreet preliminary clarification may be sought in order to confirm or allay concerns **it is not the responsibility of teachers or the school to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers.**

*In seeking clarification please use the following guidelines:-

- Note down any comment(s) made by the child in his/her own words as far as possible
- Avoid asking the child leading questions
- Avoid asking questions which encourage the child to change his/her version of events
- Do **not** guarantee confidentiality
- Reassure the child that **only** those who need to know will be informed
- Reassure the child that they have done the **right** thing
- Do not make assumptions or judgements

The safety of the child is the first priority.

Procedure where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the College staff



Summary of Advice to Staff and Volunteers on How to Respond to a Child Making a Disclosure (5 Rs)

1. Receive

- Stay calm.
- Go at the child's pace.
- Listen without displaying shock or disbelief or interrupting.
- Accept what the child is saying without judgement.

2. Reassure

- Reassure the child that he/she have done the right thing by talking to you.
- **Do not make promises that you cannot keep** (e.g. everything will be alright now, I'll stay with you).
- **Do not promise confidentiality.**
- Explain that you will need to talk to the Designated Teacher of Child Protection who will know what to do.
- **Do not investigate, make assumptions or speculate.**

3. Respond

- Respond to the child only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer the matter to the Designated teacher
- Do ask open questions (Can you tell me what happened? Anything else you wish to tell me?)
- Do not ask closed questions (those that will evoke a yes/no response). Never ask why or how. Such questions invalidate evidence where a subsequent court action is necessary.
- Do not criticise the perpetrator.
- Do explain what you will do next (talk with the Designated teacher who will know how to get help).

4. Record

- Make notes as soon as possible after the disclosure and write them up.
- Do not destroy the original notes.
- Record the date, time, place, people present and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour.
- Record the words the child used as much as possible. – if the child uses 'pet' words record those rather than translating them into 'proper' words.
- Any injuries or marks noticed can be depicted on a diagram showing position and extent.
- Record statements and observable things, rather than your interpretations and assumptions.
- Sign the record and hand it the Designated teacher

5. Refer

- **Concerns about possible abuse must be referred to the Designated Teacher as soon as possible within the working day.** He/she will liaise with the Principal in the decision making process regarding referral to statutory services, if appropriate.

Appendix 1: Documents Relevant to Child Protection

DENI circulars and other documents which are relevant to Child Protection can be obtained from the DENI website: www.deni.gov.uk

DENI circular 1999/9	Pastoral Care: Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force to Restraint or Control Pupils.
DENI circular 2003/13	Welfare and Protection of Pupils: Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003.
DENI circular 2004/09	Drugs: Guidance For Schools
DENI circular 2006/6	Guidance for Schools on safer recruitment practices for education authorities.
DENI circular 2006/7	Guidance for School on the employment of substitute teachers.
DENI circular 2006/8	Child Protection: Guidance for Schools on the requirement for training in relation to interviewing and selection panels.
DENI circular 2006/9	Child Protection: Guidance on the vetting of paid and unpaid staff.
DENI circular 2006/25	Child Protection: Vetting of School Governors.
DENI circular 2007/1	Guidance on Internet and Digital Technologies.
DENI circular 2008/3	Pre- Employment checking of Persons to Work in Schools.
DENI circular 2008/10	Employment of Substitute teachers.
DENI circular 2010/18	The Governors' Role.
DENI circular 2011/22	Internet Safety.
DENI circular 2012/18	Pupil Attendance; Absence Recording by Schools.
DENI circular 2012/19	Pre-employment checks

DENI circular 2013/01	Pre-employment checks
DENI circular 2013/1	Child Protection: Guidance on pre-employment vetting checking and safer recruitment practices.
DENI circular 2013/16	Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools.
DENI circular 2013/25	Guidance on eSafety.
DENI circular 2014/14	Pupil Participation
DENI circular 2014/24	Education Otherwise At School – Guidance
DENI circular 2014/27	Managing Information on persons who pose a risk to pupils.
DENI circular 2015/13	Dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff
DENI circular 2015/22	RSE guidance
DENI circular 2015/23	Drugs
DENI circular 2016/11	Class Sizes in Post Primary and Practical Subjects
DENI circular 2016/26	Effective Educational Uses of Mobile Digital Devices
DENI circular 2016/27	Online Safety
DENI circular 2017/04	Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide For Schools – Update
DENI circular 2018/07	Self - Assessment Audit Tools for Schools
DENI circular 2020/05	Guidance for schools on supporting remote learning to provide educational continuity
DENI circular 2020/07	Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools
DENI circular 2021/12	Addressing Bullying in Schools Act 2016: Responsibility of Schools and Board of Governors

DENI circular 2022/02	Children Who Display Harmful Sexual Behaviour
DENI circular 2022/07	Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording By School
DENI circular 2023/02	Parental Responsibility Updated Guidance for Schools

The Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) Regional Policy and Procedures (2005)

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2016)

Disposal of Records Schedule

DE Letters of Information

Sexting and the law - letter
 Sexting and the law – leaflet
 ICT Provision in Schools - letter
 E-Safety guidance circular letter
 Preventing child sexual exploitation – Circular letter issued to schools
 Disposal of child protection records – letter to principals
 Multi-Agency practice guidelines on FGM – letter from DE
 Concussion and Second Impact Syndrome
 Provision of free School Meals on Humanitarian Grounds – letter from DE
 Sexual Offences Order 2008 – DE letter to Schools
 Child Protection School Holiday Procedures – Letter to Schools
 DENI Guidance – School Development Planning 2020/21 – COVID 19

Appendix 2: Safeguarding Team

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| • Designated Teacher for Child Protection: | Mr Colin Allen |
| • Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection: | Mrs Diane Allen/Mrs Ruth Watson |
| • Teacher Responsible for E Safety: | Mrs Catherine Stewart |

^{i i} Term 'bullying' has been changed to – a pupil displaying bullying behaviour
 Term 'victim' has been changed to a pupil experiencing bullying behaviour or a pupil who has been bullied; this is in line Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum to focus more on the behaviour and less on the pupil.

