

St. Comgall's Primary School.



A Policy for Child Protection

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

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks.

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

What is child abuse?

We use the following definition:

Neglect - the actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

Physical - actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

Sexual - actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family roles..

Emotional - actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.

All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment. The definition refers to where it is the main or only form of abuse.

These types of abuse apply equally to children with disabilities but the abuse may take slightly different forms, for example, lack of supervision, or the use of physical restraints such as being confined to a wheel chair or bed.

BULLYING

TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SCHOOL'S POLICY FOR ANTIBULLYING

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

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

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

If a pupil's bullying behaviour persists, the second stage will be to instigate the child protection procedures described below.

Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse

The designated teacher for child protection is Mrs Mc Intyre. In her absence Mr Matthews will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the designated teacher, if he is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the designated teacher). Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils, and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the designated teacher (or his/her deputy, if he/she is not available must be informed immediately. He/she will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors (employing authority will also be consulted) and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

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

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

Guidelines Regarding Disclosure

If a child disclosed that he/she has been abused, it is important to talk/comfort to say:

- I believe you:
- I am glad that you have told me this:
- I am sorry that this has happened to you:
- It is not, nor ever was your fault:
- We are going to do something about this together.

Five things to do:

- Stay calm, listen, say you will take a few notes (very important as a safeguard for you).
- Do not interrogate; do not ask how, when, where or why?
- Record your notes later again (time, place, date, behaviour of the child, place where the abuse occurred. If possible, do a drawing or description of physical abuse).
- Follow guidelines immediately.
- Disclosure can leave you traumatised - remember you may need support.

Please remember – No promise of confidentiality can or should ever be made to a child or anyone else giving information about possible abuse. Staff have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children only within appropriate professional contexts.

RECORDING NOTES

These are suggested guidelines only.

- Notes should be written on the presumption that parents can request access to them.
- Note takers' personal feelings or reactions to clients or speculations about their motivations should not be recorded.

- Notes should be factual and in neutral language.

Why take notes:

- Aid to memory.
- Protection for note taker if other party alleges something different agreed during meeting.
- Opportunity for note taker to reflect on meeting, look for the positives and plan further action.
- Protection and information for the school.

When:

- As soon after session as possible.
- During session if all parties are comfortable with that.

Role of the Designated Teacher

The Designated teacher will have responsibility for:

- ensuring that all staff are aware of the procedures, including internal school arrangements.
- co-ordinating action by teachers in cases of suspected child abuse and reporting to the appropriate agencies and the Senior Management Officer (Schools) CCMS.
- ensuring that the teaching staff and the school's Education Welfare Officer are aware of children in care or on the Child Protection Register.
- ensuring that all confidential written material relating to a child protection incident remain secure.

Designated teachers and indeed all teachers need to know:

- how to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and when to make a referral
- the CCMS Child Protection procedures and the ELB's policy and procedures and the designated teachers' role with them
- the role and responsibilities of the investigating agencies, who to contact and how to liaise with them
- the requirements on record keeping
- the conduct of a Child Protection Conference and how the designated teacher or another member of staff can make an appropriate contribution to it

Sources of Advice

Down and Connor Diocesan Education Office

193 - 195 Donegall Street

BELFAST BT1 2SJ

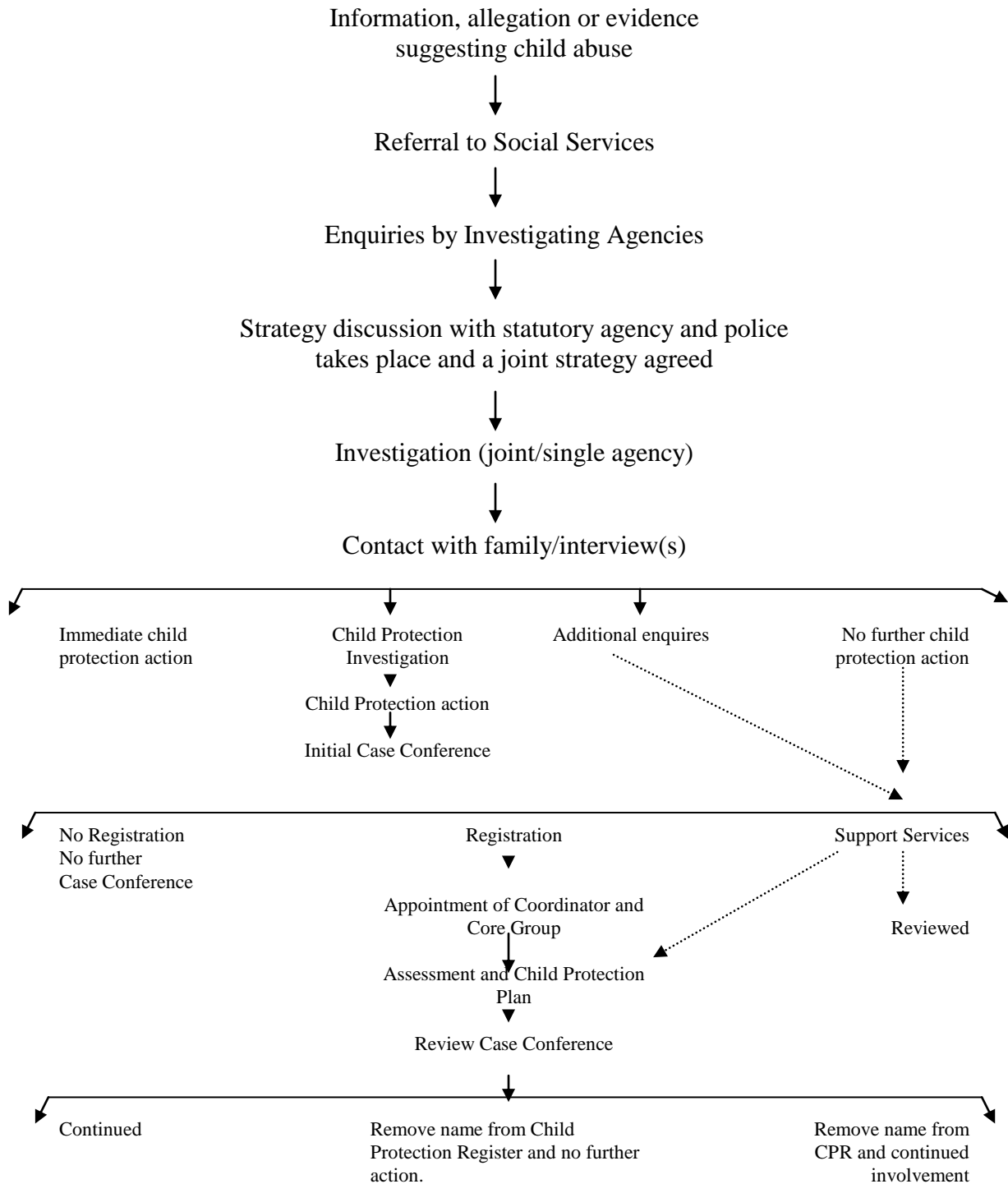
Phone: 028 90327 875

Acting Senior Education Officer: Diane Christie

N.E.E.L.B.
County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
BALLYMENA BT42 1HN
Phone: 028 25662 558
Mr Maurice Crozier – Principal Educational Psychologist

Guidance Centre
Jordanstown
Monkstown
Phone: 02890863199

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REFERRAL
ROLES OF OTHER AGENCIES



PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE IN CATHLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Child makes a disclosure to teacher or teacher has concerns about a child either as a result of one observation or many observations over a period of time. Teacher does not investigate.

MUST ACT PROMPTLY

Teacher refers the matter to designated teacher, discusses with designated teacher, and makes full notes.

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

Principal/Designated Teacher makes a referral to:

- Social Services and Care Unit

Copies of pro-forma to:

- CCMS Senior Management Officer (Schools)
- ELBS Designated Officer

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

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

- CCMS Senior Management Officer (School)
- ELB Designated Officer
- Social Services

For other sources of advice see Appendix 2

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

Other Action:

- Record Advice Given
- Monitor
- Review