

St Mary's Primary School
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
January 2022
Reviewed and Updated October 2025

St Mary's Primary School Maghery



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1. Child Protection Ethos

In St. Mary's Primary School, we have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare, and safety of the pupils in our charge. We aim to provide a caring, supportive, and safe environment in which our pupils feel secure in the knowledge that they are valued as individuals. The purpose of the procedures in our Child Protection Policy is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. We consider the care, welfare, and safety of each child in the school to be of paramount importance. The children have a right to be safe in our school. In our school we respect our children. The atmosphere within the school is one that encourages all children to do their best. We provide opportunities that enable them to take and make decisions for themselves. Our teaching of personal, social, emotional and health education as part of the Curriculum helps to develop appropriate attitudes in our children and makes them aware of the impact of their decisions on others. We also teach them how to recognise different risks in different situations and how to behave in response to them.

2. General Principles

This policy is based on DENI Circulars 1999/10, 2003/13 and 2006/06-09 on Child Protection and selection and recruitment of staff in educational establishments and outlines our current procedures on Child Protection.

The following principals form the basis of our Child Protection Policy

- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- In any incident the child's welfare must be paramount, this overrides all other considerations.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first.

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3. Other Relevant Policies

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. This policy therefore should be used in conjunction with a range of other school policies and guidelines including:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Educational visits
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health & Safety Policy
- RSE Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- ICT Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Code of conduct for Employees
- Use of reasonable force policy

Core Policies are available to parents on our school website,
www.stamarypsmaghery.co.uk

Anyone who would like a paper copy should contact the school principal.

4. Aims

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all our staff are clear about the actions necessary with regards to a Child Protection issue.

Our aims are:

- To raise the awareness of all staff and to identify responsibility for reporting possible cases of abuse.
- To ensure effective communication between all staff on Child Protection issues.
- To set down the correct procedures for those who encounter an issue of Child Protection.

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5. School Safeguarding Team

The following are members of the schools safeguarding team

- Mrs S. Copeland (Designated Teacher)
- Miss A Mc Crory (Deputy Designated Teacher)
- Mrs S Copeland (Acting Principal)
- Mrs B Leathem (Chair of the Board of Governors)
- Mrs A Breslin (Designated Governor for Child Protection)

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 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.
- 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.

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a. The Chair of the Board of Governors

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors plays a pivotal role in creating and maintaining the safeguarding ethos within the school environment, they must:

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school.
- Ensure that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy.
- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment and selection training provided by the EA Child Protection Support Service for schools, the EA governors support, and human resources departments.
- Ensure that a designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaints/ allegations against the School Principal
- Ensure that the BOG receive termly updates and a full Annual Designated Teacher Report
- 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.

b. The Designated Governor for Child Protection

The Designated Governor for Child Protection will provide the child protection lead 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 Teacher Report
- Recruitments, selection and vetting of staff.

6.2 The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher

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. This role should:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities, and role.
- Organise training for all staff (whole school training)
- Lead in the development of the school's Child Protection Policy
- Act as a point of contact for staff and parents.
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents.
- Make referrals to Social Services Gateway team or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate.
- Liaise with the CCMS/EA's Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- Keep the school principal informed.
- Provide a written annual report to the BOG regarding child protection.

It is important that the DDT works in partnership with the DT so that he/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.

6.3 The Principal

The Principal, will assist the Board of Governors 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 Board of Governors 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.

6.4 Other members of school staff

Staff in school see children over long periods and can notice indicators of abuse. They must remember the five Rs: Receive, Reassure, Respond, Record and Refer.

The member of staff must:

- Refer concerns to the Designated/ Deputy Teacher for Child Protection
- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief and support the child.
- Act promptly.
- Avail of whole school training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children
- NOT give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures
- NOT investigate.
- Not ask leading questions
- Make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child (Appendix 1 – Child protection Note of Concern Record)

6.5 Parents / Carers

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.
- Telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's situation.
- Familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Anti-Bullying, Positive Behaviour and Internet and Child Protection Policies
- Raising concerns, they have in relation to their child with the school.
- Reporting to the office and signing into the visitor when they visit the school.
- More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection

6.6 Class Teacher

The class teacher should:

- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about 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, concerns about home conditions including disclosures of domestic violence.

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.

7. How to respond to a child who makes a disclosure: -

7.1. Receive

- Stay calm.
- Listen to what the child is saying without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Accept what the child is say.
- Be discreet.

7.2. Reassure

- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by talking to you, **do not make promises that you cannot keep.**
- Do not promise confidentiality, staff have a duty to refer the matter to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. Explain that you will need to talk to Mrs Smith who will know what to do next.
- Do reassure and alleviate guilt if the child refers to it.

7.3. Respond

- Respond to the child only as far as necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer the matter to the designated teacher for child protection.
- 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, for example, did _____ do this to you?) Such questions invalidate evidence where a subsequent court action is necessary.
- Do not criticise the perpetrator as the child may love that person.
- Do explain what you will do next (talk with the Designated Teacher who will know how to get help)

7.4. Record

- Make notes as soon as possible after hearing what the child has said and write them up (**Appendix 1**)
- Do not destroy these 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 to the Designated Teacher

7.5. Refer

- **Concerns about possible abuse must be referred to the Designated Teacher as soon as possible within the working day.**
- The designated teacher will liaise with the Principal in the decision-making process regarding possible referral to statutory services.

8. Definition of Child Abuse

What Is Child Abuse?

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from 'Co-operating to Safeguarding Children and Young People in NI 2016'.

8.1 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. There are different types of abuse, and a child may suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child.

8.2 Types of Abuse

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, hygiene, 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 (faltering growth)

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Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, Domestic Violence, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

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

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 or valued. 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. It may involve causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional 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, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking.

8.3 Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power, or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection, or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care, and education at some point.

8.4 Children Who Display Sexually Harmful Behaviour

When abuse of a child is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the procedures outlined in this policy will be followed. It is important in such situations to distinguish between behaviours which are experimental in nature and those that are exploitative and harmful. Advice and support will be sought in such circumstances from the Education Authority's Designated Officer for Child Protection and where appropriate a referral made to the statutory agencies. In all such cases a risk assessment will be undertaken, and an individual support and safety plan identified. Appropriate services will also be provided for the children involved. The above guidance follows DE Circular 2016/05 'Children Who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour'.

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.

8.5 Domestic Violence and Abuse

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
- Virtual

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

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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

9. Operation Encompass

St Mary's Primary School is 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 see [The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#).

10. Signs and symptoms of abuse ~ Possible Indicators

Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<p>Unexplained bruises – in various stages of healing – grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations; or abrasions; untreated injuries; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday</p>	<p>Self-destructive tendencies; aggressive to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; improbable excuses to explain injuries; chronic runaway; uncomfortable with physical contact; come to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home; clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories</p>

Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<p>Well below average in height and weight; “failing to thrive”; poor hair and skin; alopecia; swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet; recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; sudden speech disorders; signs of self-mutilation; signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness); extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).</p>	<p>Apathy and dejection; inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations; rocking/head banging; inability to play; indifference to separation from family indiscriminate attachment; reluctance for parental liaison; fear of new situation; chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour; poor peer relationships.</p>

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Neglect

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<p>Looks very thin, poorly and sad; constant hunger; lack of energy; untreated medical problems; special needs of child not being met; constant tiredness; inappropriate dress; poor hygiene; repeatedly unwashed; smelly; repeated accidents, especially burns.</p>	<p>Tired or listless (falls asleep in class); steals food; compulsive eating; begging from class friends; withdrawn; lacks concentration; misses school medicals; reports that no carer is at home; low self-esteem; persistent non-attendance at school; exposure to violence including unsuitable videos.</p>

Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<p>Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs; bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas; torn, stained or bloody underclothes; chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches; difficulty in walking or sitting; frequent urinary infections; avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers; unexplained pregnancies where the identity of the father is vague; anorexia/gross over-eating.</p>	<p>What the child tells you; Withdrawn; chronic depression; excessive sexual precociousness; seductiveness; children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal; over concerned for siblings; poor self-esteem; self-devaluation; lack of confidence; peer problems; lack of involvement; massive weight change; suicide attempts (especially adolescents); hysterical/angry outbursts; lack of emotional control; sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour; inappropriate sex play; repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories; vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; exposure to pornographic material.</p>

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Sexual Exploitation

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc. without plausible explanation
- Truancing, leaving school without permission
- Persistently going missing or returning late
- Receiving lots of texts/phone calls prior to leaving
- Change in mood – agitated/stressed
- Appearing distraught/dishevelled or under the influence of substances
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age
- Physical symptoms e.g. bruising; bite marks
- Collected from school by unknown adults or taxis
- New peer groups
- Significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours
- Low self esteem
- Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less)
- Self-harm and other expressions of despair
- Evidence or suspicion of substance abuse

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11. Procedures

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection is Mrs Copeland and in her absence the Deputy Designated Teacher is Mr Black. In dealing with any issues linked to child protection she is guided by two principles.

- In accordance with legislation the welfare of the child is paramount.
- Confidentiality should be respected as far as possible.

11.1

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.

Do:	Do not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to what the child says • Assure the child they are not at fault • Explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret • Document exactly what the child says using his/her exact words • Remember not to promise the child confidentiality • Stay calm • Listen • Accept • Reassure • Explain what you are going to do • Record accurately • Seek support for yourself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask leading questions • Put words into the child's mouth • Ignore the child's behaviour • Remove any clothing • Panic • Promise to keep secrets • Ask leading questions • Make the child repeat the information unnecessarily • Delay • Start to investigate • Do Nothing

11.2 How a parent can report a concern.

At St Mary's P.S we aim to work closely with the parents/carers in supporting all aspects of the child's development and wellbeing. 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 or the Principal/designated teacher for child protection. If they are still concerned, they may talk to the Chair of the BOG. At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local gateway team or to the PSNI Public protection unit.

All information and numbers are shown on Appendix 2

11.3 Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff including volunteers.

Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a child they should not investigate – this is a matter for social services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher and full notes should be made. 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 teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The designated teacher will decide whether in the best interest of the child the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately.

The designated teacher may consult with the EA's Designated Officer for Child Protection or Social Services Gateway Team before a referral is made. During consultation with the Designated Officer the child's details will be shared. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our prime priority.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the designated teacher will telephone Social Services Gateway Team. He/she will also notify the EA Designated Officer for Child Protection. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be completed and forwarded to the Gateway team with a copy sent to the EA Designated Officer for Child Protection.

If the Principal has concerns that a child may be at immediate risk from a volunteer, the services of the volunteer will be terminated immediately.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in **Appendix 3**.

11.4 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school staff.

If a complaint about possible abuse is made against a member of staff, the principal (or designated teacher if he/she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal or Designated Teacher).

If a complaint is made against the principal, the designated teacher will inform the Chairperson of the BOGs who will ensure that necessary action is taken.

Where the matter is referred to social services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The chairperson of the BOG will be informed immediately.

The procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in **Appendix 4**

12. St. Mary's recognise the five main responsibilities in the area of Child Protection. These are in the areas of prevention, recognition, response, referral, and confidentiality/record keeping.

12.1 Prevention.

Our school environment is a listening environment that makes it easier for children to share their concerns. The Board of Governors ensures that St. Mary's Primary School has and follows the Code of Practice for the conduct of all members of staff towards the pupils. The Code of Practice covers all activities whether on the school premises or elsewhere. Any other adults beyond the educational establishment who are invited to be involved as helpers/leaders on educational visits are subject to vetting procedures in keeping with current arrangements for the care and protection of children.

12.2 Recognition.

See definition of Child Abuse

Bullying - Bullying is not tolerated in our school. All staff is 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 child showing bullying behaviour. Parents of both parties will be personally contacted if bullying behaviour is identified. Our aim is to create a safe and secure learning environment for the pupils in our care. In St. Mary's bullying is unacceptable and it will be confronted and stopped.

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12.3 Response

In the event of an allegation of child abuse the member of staff will:

- Listen to the child and accept what is said.
- Record statements.
- Explain what they have to do next and to whom they have to talk to
- Reassure the child they have done the right thing to talk about it.
- Refer information to the designated member of staff Mrs Copeland (or in her absence to the Deputy Designated member of staff Miss Campbell).

12.4 Referral

If there are concerns that a child may be at risk the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

All the adults in our school share responsibility for keeping our children safe. We may on occasions report concerns which on investigation prove unfounded. It is better to be safe than sorry and we trust that parents while they maybe naturally upset by any investigation will accept that the school acted in the child's best interest.

13. Confidentiality and Record Keeping 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. Where abuse is suspected schools have a legal duty to refer to the Statutory Agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

Should a child transfer to another school whilst there is current child protection concerns, we will share these concerns with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school. Records will be kept in accordance with the Schedule of Disposal of Records and DE Circular 2016/20 Child Protection – Record Keeping in Schools issued on 30th Sept 2016.

All records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file which is held on the child.

The only people who have access to these records are the members of the safeguarding team.

When an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the school's disciplinary procedures, a summary is entered on a Record of Abuse Complaints in a hard back book. This entry which will contain details of the complaint will be made available to the Board of Governors at least annually.

14. Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Group Meetings

The designated teacher/ deputy designated teacher or principal may be invited to attend an initial and review Child Protection Case Conference and/or core group meetings convened by the Health and Social Care Trust. They will provide a written report which will be compiled following consultation with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principal on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the child protection register will be monitored and supported in accordance with the child protection plan.

15. Vetting Procedures

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

16. 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. The school's code of conduct is available on request and is made available to all staff.

17. Reasonable force

There may be times when adults in our school in the course of their duty use physical intervention to restrain children. The principal requires the adult involved in any such incident to report this to him immediately and to record it in the Child Protection Book.

18. Staff Training

St. Mary's are committed to in-service training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on Policy and procedures with some members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and annual refresher training. The Principal/Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses provided by the Child Protection Support service for Schools.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school, they are briefed on the school's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and given copies of these policies.

19. Online Safety

Staff in St Mary's PS recognises the benefits that come from learning, exploring and connecting with each other online and are committed to educating staff, pupils and parents about how to act appropriately and stay safe online. Refer to Digital Safeguarding Policies.

20. The Preventative Curriculum

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through class assemblies. There is a permanent child protection notice board in the school corridor and relevant information in each resource area, which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers.

The school participates in many initiatives to deliver a preventative curriculum and are delivering the following:

NSPCC Keeping Safe Programme:

The Keeping Safe Programme provides an integrated, developmentally staged and comprehensive approach to teaching children how to keep safe.

This involves:

- A whole school approach to implantation
- Comprehensive training for all school staff
- Patent workshops/information.

It aims:

- To recognise education as integral to preventing abuse in childhood.
- To adopt a whole school approach to delivering preventative education in our school.
- To provide parents and all school staff with the training and support necessary to deliver Keeping Safe messages.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues:

- Childline workshops
- NSPCC Speak Out Keep Safe Programme
- Drugs 4 Life Programme P7
- PSNI- Safety Talk (Halloween)
- ECO Committee Healthy Living Activities
- NIFS Fire Safety Awareness Workshop P5
- Multicultural Awareness- Multicultural Days
- PATHS lessons (Whole School)
- Cycling Proficiency Scheme P7
- Internet Safety Week
- Anti-Bullying Week
- Children are **not allowed** to bring mobile phones, smart watches with photography ability, or any other digital recording devices to school. (Unless this has been permitted by the school principal)

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21. Monitoring and Evaluation

The safeguarding team in St. Mary's will update this Policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it as necessary. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the child protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Teacher/Principal. On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

Date Policy Reviewed: October 2025

Ratified by the Board of Governors:

Signed:

_____ (Designated Teacher)

_____ (Deputy Designated Teacher)

_____ (Principal)

_____ (Chairperson Board of Governors)

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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:

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Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:

Any further action taken:

Written report passed to Designated Teacher:

Yes:

No:

If 'No' state reason:

Date and time of report to the Designated Teacher:

Written note from staff member placed on pupil's Child Protection file

If 'No' state reason:

*Record actual words used by the child/ young person

Name of staff member making the report: _____

Signature of Staff Member: _____ Date: _____

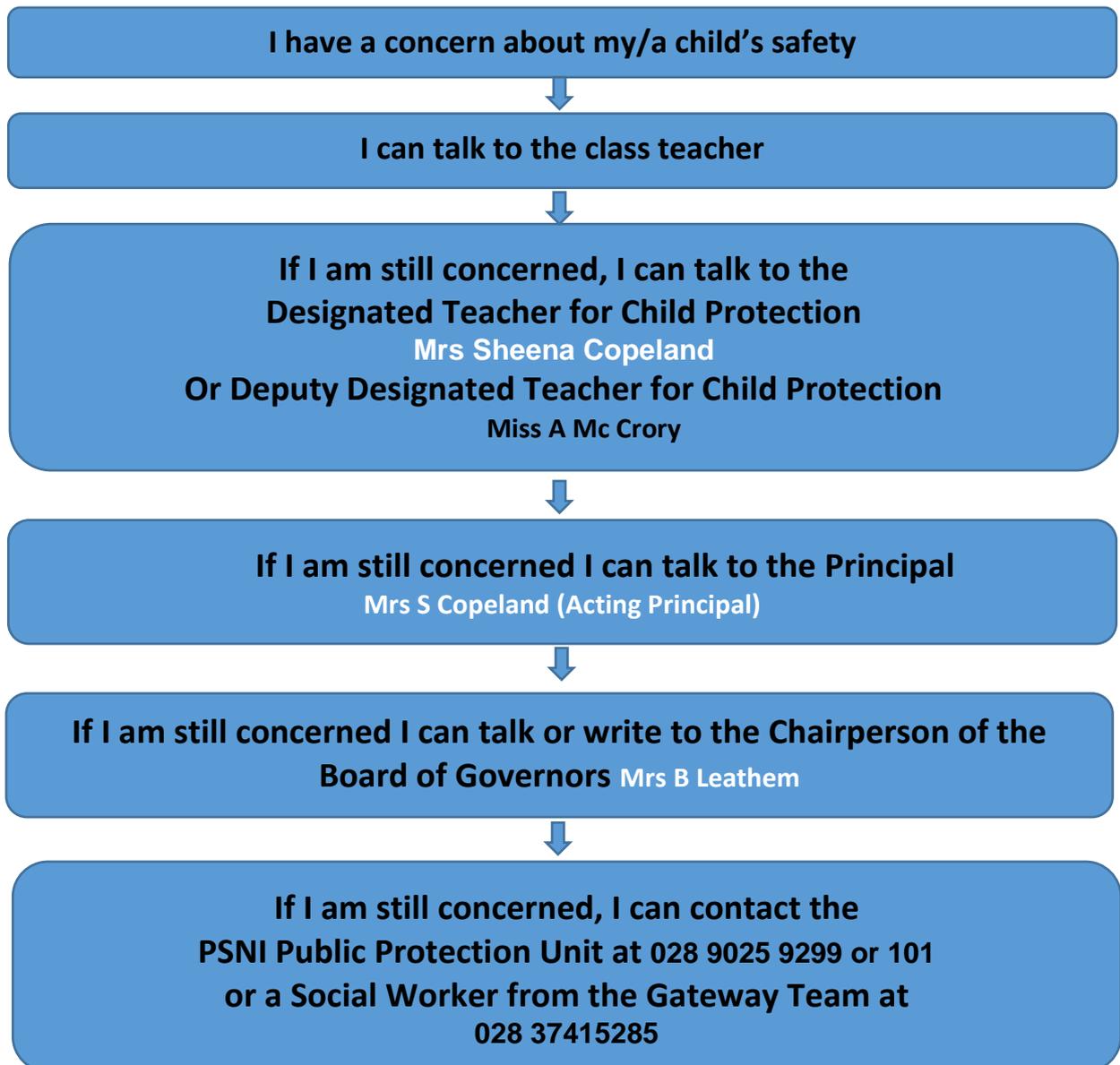
Signature of Designated Teacher: _____ Date: _____

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Appendix 2

If you have concerns regarding Safeguarding or Child Protection, the procedure to follow is outlined below:

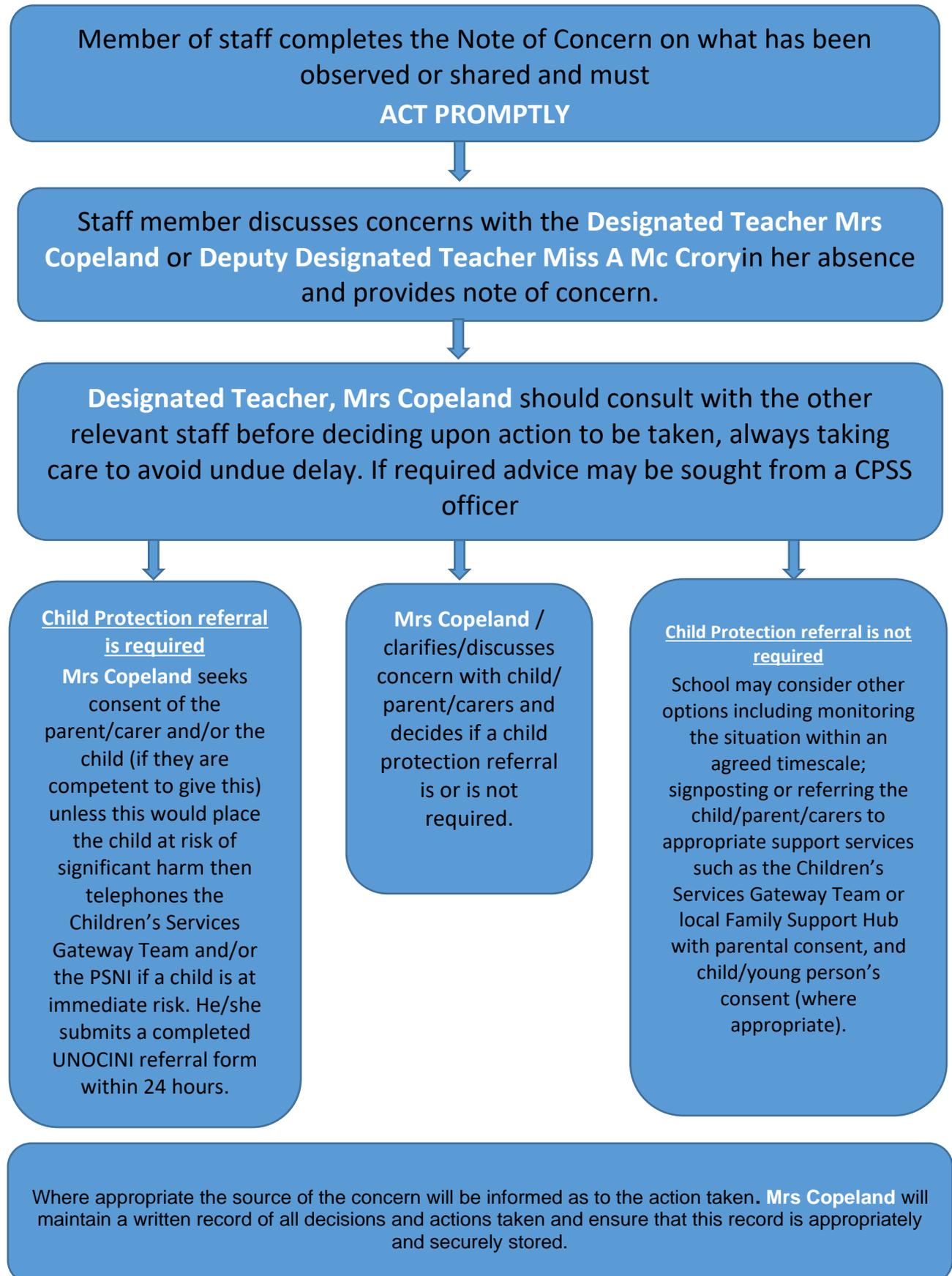
NAME	ROLE
Mrs S Copeland	Designated Teacher for Child Protection
Miss A Mc Crory	Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection



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 - 0800 343 424) 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 3

St Mary's Primary School, Maghery Procedure where the School has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff



Appendix 4

Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff

If I have a Safeguarding concern about a member of staff, I speak to the **Principal Mrs Copeland (Acting)** (If the allegation is against the Principal I speak to the Deputy Designated Teacher for child protection **Miss Mc Crory**)

Guidance on the Next Steps

Mrs Copeland will establish the facts, consult with the Chair of BOG and seeks advice from the key agencies as appropriate.

Possible Outcomes

Following on from establishing the facts, seeking advice from Key Agencies and discussion with the Chair of the Board of Governors, agree a way forward from the options below.

Precautionary suspension is not appropriate and the matter is concluded.

Allegation addressed through relevant disciplinary procedures.

Precautionary suspension under Child Protection procedures imposed

Alternatives to precautionary suspension imposed

Appendix 5

Where the concern is related to another child in the school the following process will be followed:

I must make an appointment with a member of the School's Safe Guarding Team; or Designated Teacher for Child Protection **Mrs Copeland** or in her absence Principal /Deputy Designated Teacher **Miss A Mc Crory**. If the concern is of a child protection nature the procedures below will be followed. Otherwise, other school policy e.g. Anti-Bullying or Positive Behaviour will be followed.



If I am still concerned, I can talk / write to the Chair of the Board of Governors, **Miss Leathem**

What will happen

1. Any Child Protection information will be recorded / kept by the Safeguarding Team.
2. Depending on the nature of the concern the school may take advice from the EA Child Protection Team. Their advice will determine the nature of subsequent actions.

Depending on the nature of the concern the school may take further action. If it is a Child Protection Concern, it must go to Social Services.

Everyone has a legal responsibility to report a child protection concern

At any time, I can talk to the social worker Southern Health & Social Care Trust Tel:02837415285 or PSNI Central Referral Unit 028 9025 9299 or 101

Appendix 6

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.

- **Foundation Stage 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, classroom assistants and other adults will come into contact with children while helping them with toileting, washing and changing their clothing.

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

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

- **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 and school trips to ensure our current safeguarding policies are adhered to and that appropriate staffing levels are in place.