

# **Policy on Child Protection**

## MILLBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

# POLICY ON CHILD PROTECTION

It is our desire at this school to see children happy and able to achieve to the limits of their potential. We have a responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of all our pupils and it is our duty to provide a safe and secure environment in which policies and procedures are in place to ensure the protection of all our children from any dangers, ie abuse etc. We will help pupils learn about the risks of possible abuse, recognise unwelcome attention and behaviour in others and help them acquire confidence and skills they need to keep them safe.

**All our staff / school personnel**, regardless of status, have been subjected to appropriate background checks through Access NI. The staff of our school has also adopted a **Code of Practice** for our behaviour towards pupils (see Appendix 1).

**Prior to anyone being employed in the school on any basis whatsoever, it is the duty of the governing body to ensure that proper vetting has occurred. This function to fully vet all employees is placed upon the Principal who will advise the Governors and/or Area Board as deemed necessary. However, in the final analysis, no employee will be permitted to work in the school without the standard vetting having been carried out and scrutinised by the Principal. When the Principal is unavailable for whatever reason to carry out this duty, the responsibility to do so falls upon the Vice-Principal and then the Senior Management Team, in that order.**

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 - have clear guidelines 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.

To achieve these ends the following policy statement, guidance notes and procedures have been drawn up. They are reviewed yearly to ensure their legality, comprehensiveness and effectiveness.

### **What is Child Abuse?**

1. a) A direct act    b) Failure to provide proper care    c) Both a and b

2. **Abuse takes a number of forms, including:**

#### **Neglect**

The persistent or severe neglect of a child, which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical injury to a child, including poisoning, where there is a definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion, that the injury was deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

### **Sexual Abuse**

The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles. In other words, it is the use of children by adults for sexual gratification.

### **Emotional Abuse**

The severe, adverse effects on the behaviour and emotional development of a child caused by persistent or severe, emotional ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment.

### **Grave Concern**

While strictly speaking not a form of abuse but a category of registration of abuse, this term covers children whose situations do not currently fit in any of the four categories above but where social and medical assessments indicate that they are at significant risk of above. These could include situations where another child in the household has been harmed or the household contains a known abuser.

### **Bullying**

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. School 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 bully.

Further guidance for staff and parents is set out in our Anti-Bullying Policy.

## ARRANGEMENTS FOR REPORTING ABUSE IN SCHOOL ARE -

**Designated Teacher for Child Abuse – Mrs N Moffatt  
Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Abuse are Mr A Handforth  
and Mr I Gilchrist**

3. a) The Principal shall be responsible for notifying the local Social Services Officer (028 70352221) and the EA in the event of a case, or suspected case, of child abuse coming to light within the school.

In the event of the Principal being unavailable, the Vice-Principal shall assume responsibility for notifying the designated officer.

**The EA Officer is Mrs Elaine Craig**

### **Education Authority**

EA Belfast Office, 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ  
Antrim Board Centre, 17 Lough Road, Antrim, BT41 4DH  
T: 028 95985590 M: 07976866663

- b) Signs of abuse may include:
- (i) Unexplained behavioural changes.
  - (ii) Unexplained performance changes.
  - (iii) Bruises, lacerations and burns.
  - (iv) Inadequate clothing, poor growth or hunger.
  - (v) Excessive dependence or attention-seeking.
  - (vi) Withdrawal or sexual precocity.
  - (vii) A change in the pattern of attendance.

**Please note these signs are NOT PROOF that abuse has occurred, but only suggest that there may be cause for concern and vigilance amongst staff. Clearly such signs being present and recorded on more than one occasion would require that the attention of the designated teacher be sought.**

## **4. TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

- (a) As part of their pastoral responsibilities teachers must be alert to the advised signs.
- (b) Teachers, if signs emerge, should take the opportunity to talk to the child in a tactful and sympathetic manner. If enquiries lead to definite suspicion of abuse, the teacher must then inform the designated teacher, and co-operate with them in completing (d) below. (The designated teacher will inform the Principal as required.)
- (c) It is not the responsibility of the school to either undertake investigations or inquire of the parents. This is the job of the Social Services Department (as is notifying the police). Please note where a

child, particularly a young child, alleges he/she has been sexually abused, this should be taken very seriously and the **Social Services notified immediately** by the Principal. It is then the Principal's role to co-operate fully with the Social Services Department.

(d) When abuse is suspected, a record of all the information available must be kept. The Principal or designated teacher must note the **factual** details regarding:

1. What they have observed.
2. When it was observed (signs of physical injury should be described in detail).

**DO NOT REMOVE A CHILD'S CLOTHING.**

3. What the child said.

(e) When the EWO or Educational Psychologist are the first to identify an abuse problem, it is their responsibility to inform the Principal and the EA.

**The EA will be responsible for contacting the Social Services.**

(f) When someone employed within the school is suspected of child abuse, the Principal or designated teacher should be informed. They will then in turn report to the EA and the Chairperson of the Governors. It is then the EA's responsibility to notify Social Services.

g) If Social Services find out about child abuse first, it is their duty to inform the school and provide them with all the relevant details. It will then be the school's responsibility to pay particular attention to the attendance and development of all such children and to report any cause for further concern to Social Services. Social Services in turn must inform the school of any termination of a court order or change in status or placement of a child. If such a child moves school, the Principal shall be responsible for informing Social Services Department, who will then ensure that the necessary information is passed on to the new school.

h) Where a case of child abuse is suspected, Social Services will call a case conference to which the Principal and designated teacher, after consulting with the relevant members of staff, may attend.

i) The school shall, by providing a caring atmosphere where all children are encouraged to care for and consider the feelings and opinions of others, endeavour to begin the development of more realistic attitudes towards the responsibilities of adult life, including parenthood in all children.

## **TEACHER GUIDANCE NOTES**

The purpose of these notes is to inform teachers about the extent and nature of the problem and how it may manifest itself. It also gives some background information about how other agencies function and how we, as teachers, can co-operate with these agencies for the benefit of the children in our care.

### **PATTERNS OF ABUSE**

#### **1. Brief Incidents**

- may happen only once.
- may be an acquaintance or stranger / child may be abducted or abused; both boys and girls fit into this scenario.

#### **2. Continuous Relationships**

- Abuse starts gradually and continues for weeks /months/years.
- Abuser may be a neighbour, family friend, baby-sitter; victims may be boys or girls.

#### **3. Incest**

- Abuser is a member of the child's immediate family.
- Victim is most often a girl.
- Happens to boys too.
- Abuse usually begins gradually, but happens more often as time goes on.
- Abuse may go on for years until someone outside the family discovers or until the child grows up and moves out.
- Most abusers are men; about 3% women.
- 75% of abusers are well known by the abused person.
- **Children rarely falsely report abuse.** They have difficulty expressing what has happened; they probably do not have the vocabulary nor understanding. It can come out in drawings or play.

#### **4. Symptoms of Sexual Abuse**

- Acting out aggressive behaviour - severe tantrums.
- Overly complaint behaviour, watchful attitude.
- Pseudo maturity - sexually explicit or inappropriate behaviour with adults.
- Secretive behaviour; "can't tell you". An air of detachment.
- Few friends at school - problem with relationships.
- Stomach pains - no medical explanation.
- Sleep disturbances - bedwetting, nightmares.
- Self-inflicted injuries.
- Feelings of guilt and shame.

- Power issues – child feels powerless and lack control in many situations.
- Hugs; clings in the extreme to an adult.
- Impaired memory; blocking defences.
- Running away, don't want to go home.
- Clinical depression, withdrawal.

**NOTE - These are only signs and NOT PROOF of abuse.** In reality you need real evidence. However when the signs are continually present then you must discuss your concerns with the designated teacher.

5. **Extent of Long Term Damage Depends on:**

- How much the child trusted, or expected to be able to trust, the person who abused them.
- How long abuse was carried out.
- How well the child was believed, helped and protected when abuse discovered.

**Damage can be physical but also emotional:** low self-esteem, self-destructive mental illness, and poor ability to make close trusting relationships.

If proper help can be given, recovery is possible; it may take a couple of years. There is a need to help the child at the time if they are to recover; this **is essential.**

6. **What should teachers do?**

- Co-operate with Social Services.
- Engage the child - assure them you can be trusted to help.
- Disclosure - let the child tell you.
- Report to the Principal/Designated Teacher.
- Recovery - treat them as normal and reassure them.
- Prevention - we must teach 'Keep away from strangers' and 'Say **NO** to strangers'

7. **Case Conferences**

**Possible Members of Committee**

- Assistant Principal Social Worker
- Doctor
- Nurse
- PSNI Liaison Inspector

- Senior Social Worker
- Nursing Officer
- Social Worker
- Health Visitor / Education Welfare
- Investigating Police Officer
- General Practitioner

Other personnel may be invited to attend as appropriate.

#### 8. **Functions of Committee**

- To share knowledge.
- To formulate a diagnosis and full family assessment, including the degree of risk of child abuse to all children within the family.
- To decide on registration / de-registration nomination of a 'key' worker and other 'care' personnel (Core Group).
- To recommend a protection plan.
- To formulate relevant plans to work with the family to consider if a particular course of action needs to be pursued as far as the alleged abused is concerned.
- To agree a review procedure.

#### 9. **Purpose of Child Protection Register**

- To provide detailed, readily available information about children who are known or suspected to have suffered abuse within the agreed criteria.
- To provide an aid to diagnosis of, and sequence of, repeated events which might otherwise be unrelated and not seen as patterns of repeated abuse.
- To provide a basis for the regular review and monitoring of the child and family.
- To provide statistical data about the extent and nature of the problem and to inform the agencies concerned.

#### 10. **Social Worker's Role in Child Protection**

Social Services have a statutory duty and powers to investigate alleged child abuse. They have the authority to take a child into care if they deem it necessary.

They also have statutory duties to promote the welfare of children by advising, guiding and assisting the welfare of children. (They aim to keep families together if at all possible.)

## 11. When Child Abuse is Reported What Happens?

Child is abused.

Abuse Recognised/Reported.

Referral - simply a sharing of information.

Investigation - Establishing Abuse?

**Initial assessment of risk** - police may be involved.

- Talk to person who reported it.
- Talk to child - open stage (no prompting).
- Talk to child - more detailed questioning.
- Take appropriate action including medical examination, forensic etc.

Case Conference Registration

Assessment/Care Plan

This can result in a legal case taken by PSNI (criminal)  
or a Civil Case taken by Social Services.

Review

De-registration

## 12. Role of Designated Teacher

- Through in-service build up a detailed knowledge of the issues involved in child protection.
- Disseminate knowledge to all staff - procedures - curricular issues.
- Keep a record of observations/information on pupils who may be at risk.
- In conjunction with the Principal, liaise with the outside agencies as necessary.
- To ensure all staff and Governors' training is relevantly reviewed and updated.
- To maintain and monitor the whole school Codes of Conduct.
- To lead safeguarding assemblies and annual class visits
- To ensure safeguarding information is shared with parents/guardians as relevant.
- To be actively involved in on-going safeguarding CPD.
- To work with all relevant outside agencies to ensure the appropriate care of all pupils.
- To meet termly with the Designated Governor for Safeguarding.
- To work at the Principal/Governors' discretion re all safeguarding issues and policies.

**Last Review September 2024**

**Next Review September 2025**

**Appendix 1**

# A Code of Conduct for Employees within Millburn Primary School

## INTRODUCTION

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interests of the child as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards children in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children gain from positive interaction with school staff. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. Our rule of thumb is that 'By treating our children with dignity and respect we will ensure that our behaviour is beyond reproach.'

## CODE OF CONDUCT

### 1. Meetings with Pupils

- a) Staff should be aware of the dangers, which may arise from interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- b) Where such conditions cannot apply, members of staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.
- c) Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school will take active measures to facilitate this.
- d) If a teacher requires to speak to a child confidentially during contact time this could take place outside the classroom with the door open, out of earshot but in sight of the pupils.
- e) Teachers should avoid being alone with a child.

### 2. Physical Contact with Pupils

- (a) As a general principle, members of staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- b) **It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent**

would provide. Staff should not, and must not, feel inhibited from providing this.

There are occasions when physical contact is necessary - handwriting, use of cutlery, reassurance, changing of clothing, school performances, Physical Education, Drama.

- c) Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm. (Refer to 'Guidance on use of Reasonable Force.') **Our general rule of thumb is: - 'If the child takes the lead it is acceptable behaviour and should/may be reciprocated. If you take the lead it is unacceptable behaviour.'**
  - d) Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to a child misbehaviour unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
  - e) Staff who have to administer First Aid to a pupil should ensure, wherever possible, that this is done in the presence of other children or adult. However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide First Aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.
  - f) Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by a pupil, parent, or other casual observer should be avoided.
  - g) Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/ her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal or the designated teacher for Child Protection.
  - h) Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out-of-school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work setting.
3. **Choice and Use of Teaching Materials:**  
If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using the material.
4. **Relationships and Attitudes.**  
Within the Pastoral Care policies of the school, staff should ensure that their relationships with the pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with older children (adolescent).

## Appendix 2

### CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

All children have the right to grow up in a safe, loving and happy environment. It is the intention of school staff to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare of children is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.

There are four main kinds of child abuse. The following are details and possible symptoms:

**Neglect**: The confirmed or suspected persistent or significant neglect of a child. Symptoms may include hunger, inadequate clothing, and constant lack of cleanliness and regular tiredness or failure to thrive.

**Physical Abuse**: Confirmed or suspected deliberate injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical suffering to a child. Symptoms may include unexplained injuries, bruises or burns, especially repeated ones. There may be a refusal to explain these and/ or fear of physical contact.

**Emotional Abuse**: Emotional ill-treatment or rejection. Symptoms may include delays in physical, mental and emotional development and unexplained fears.

**Sexual Abuse**: Confirmed or suspected exploitation of a child; where any adult touches a child's private parts in a way which makes the child feel unhappy and embarrassed. Symptoms may include an unusual sexual awareness (evidenced in behaviour, conversation or in artwork) or affection expressed sexually, which appears inappropriate to the child's age. The child may, on the other hand, appear unusually withdrawn and unhappy.

It is always possible that the above symptoms could be attributed to other family situations and certain other causes. However, the fact that they may be attributed to child abuse must not be ignored.

#### **What to do if concerned about the possibility of child abuse:**

The school has designated teachers whose role is to take responsibility for liaising with the social services and other agencies over cases of abuse. The designated teacher is **Mrs Moffatt**. In the event of her absence Mr Handforth will undertake the role.

Where non-teaching staff are alerted to the possibility of abuse they should inform either the **class teacher or the designated teacher immediately**. The teacher will then seek some clarification from the child. No promise of confidentiality can or should ever be given where abuse is alleged.

The chief task at this stage is to listen and not to interrupt or ask any direct questions. The information disclosed should be recorded accurately.

### **Procedures for dealing with:**

**Bullying:** Procedures for dealing with bullying as a form of abuse are held in a separate anti-bullying policy.

**Peer Abuse:** Where there is suspected abuse of a child by another child or young person then the appropriate child protection procedures should be followed both for the victim and for the alleged abuser.

<b>INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES INVOLVING STAFF</b>
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### **Conduct of staff:**

The conduct of staff towards the children must always be above reproach at all times. In safeguarding the welfare of the children, staff must never abuse their position of trust. Staff should be alert to any suspicion of physical or sexual abuse. They should also be aware of the negative aspect of emotional abuse in the form of persistent sarcasm or verbal bullying. Members of staff should ensure that their contact with the children could never be perceived or alleged as abusive.

### **Training:**

The subject will also be addressed in the induction of newly appointed staff, both teaching and non-teaching.

### **Guidelines covering Physical Contact with Children:**

It is important for staff to be sensitive to a child's reaction to physical contact and to act appropriately. It is also important not to touch children, however casually, on parts of the body or in circumstances, which may be considered indecent.

### **Allegations against Staff:**

Any complaints made that a member of staff has abused a pupil will be thoroughly investigated using the child protection procedures. Advice will immediately be sought from the designated child protection officer, EA and Social Services. Preliminary enquiries will be carried out with an open mind. These enquiries will have regard to the welfare of the child concerned and of the other children in school, to the efficient functioning of the school and to the rights of the individual against whom the complaint has been made. (The absolute right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.)

**Remember:** Are you concerned about the welfare of a child?

Have you reason to suspect a form of abuse may be involved?

Have you been informed about a case of suspected abuse?

REPORT YOUR CONCERN IMMEDIATELY TO THE DESIGNATED TEACHER  
Mrs Nicola Moffatt. She will investigate the concern and note your comments.

## CHILD PROTECTION IN MILLBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES ILLUSTRATE HOW CONCERNS RELATING TO CHILD PROTECTION ARE DEALT WITH IN THE SCHOOL:

HOW CAN A PARENT MAKE A COMPLAINT REGARDING CONCERNS FOR THEIR CHILD'S SAFETY?

*I have a concern about my child's safety.*



*I can talk to the class teacher.*



*If I am still concerned, I can talk to Mrs Moffatt who is the Designated Teacher or Mr Handforth, the Deputy Designated Teacher*



*If I am still concerned, I can speak to the Vice-Principal, Mr Ruairi McClean or the Principal, Mrs Sharon Lamont.*



*If I am still concerned, I can talk or write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mr S Murdock.*

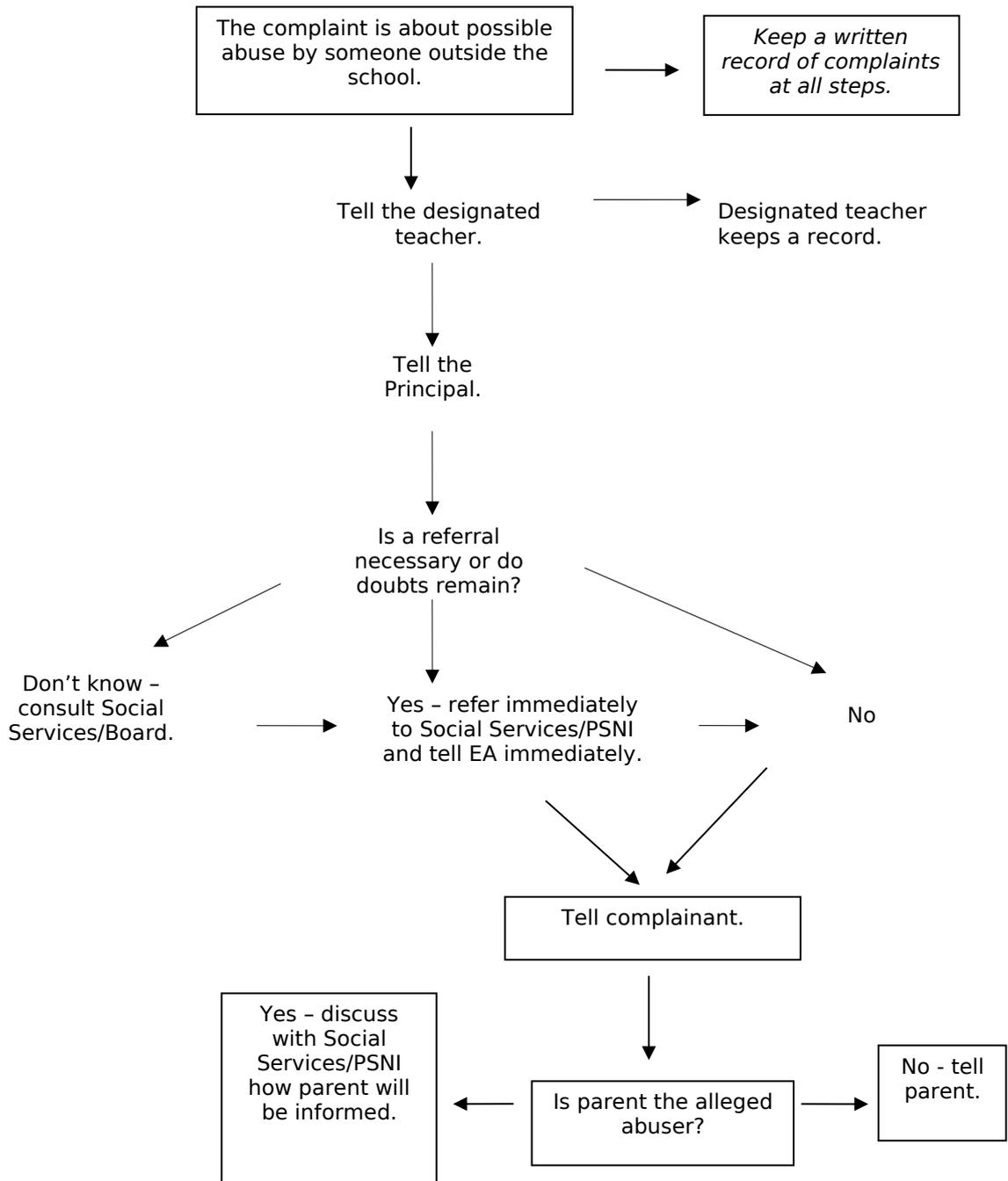


*At any time I can talk to a social worker or the PSNI.*

## CHILD PROTECTION

PROCEDURE WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS CONCERNS, OR HAS BEEN GIVEN INFORMATION, ABOUT POSSIBLE ABUSE BY SOMEONE

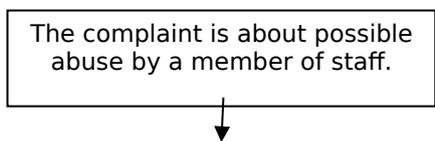
OTHER THAN A MEMBER OF STAFF

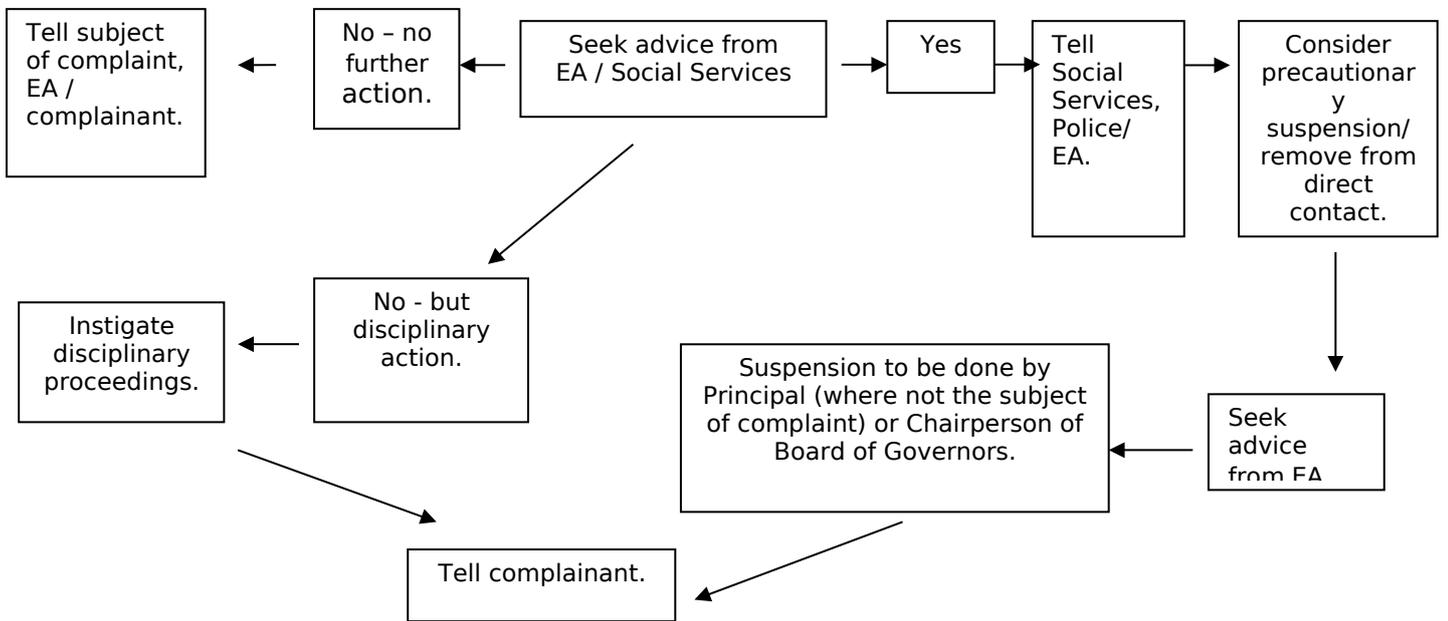
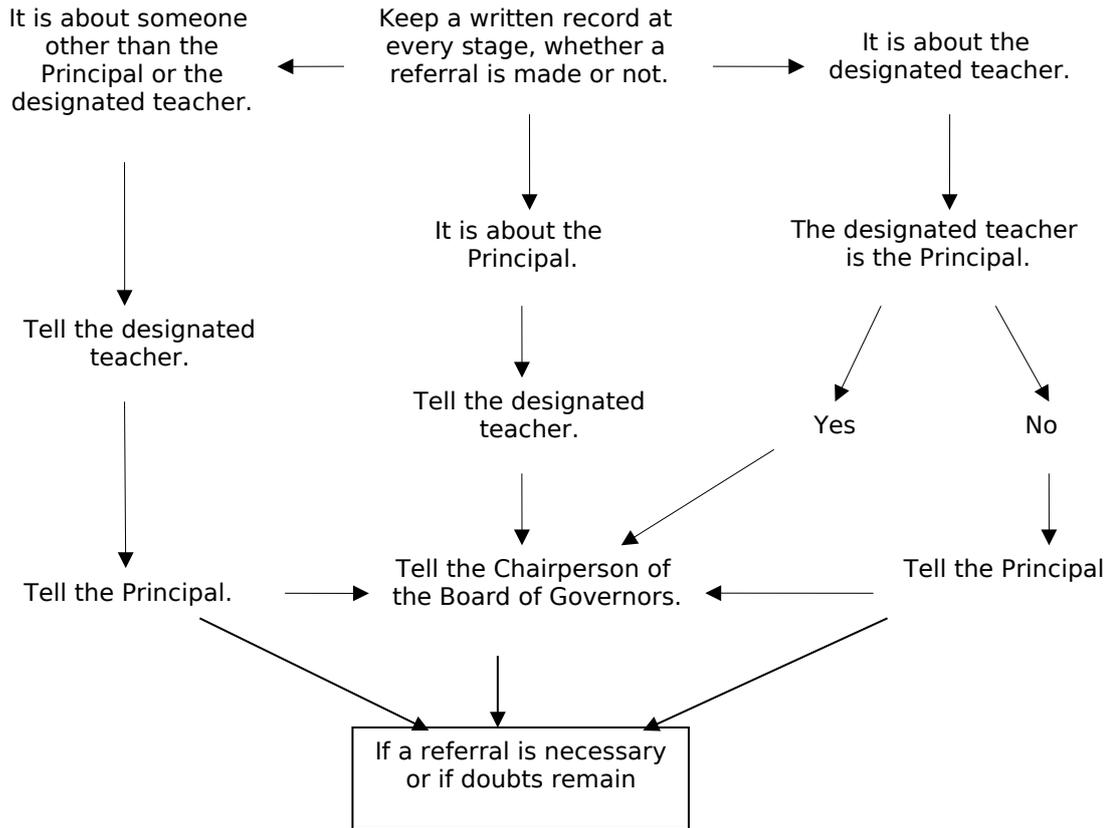


Please note: Designated Teacher is Mrs Moffatt. If Mrs Moffatt is not available, then speak to Mr Handforth, Mr Gilchrist or Mrs Lamont.

**CHILD PROTECTION**

PROCEDURE WHERE A COMPLAINT HAS BEEN MADE ABOUT POSSIBLE ABUSE BY A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL'S STAFF





Seek advice from the ELB and Social Services