

# **REGENT HOUSE SCHOOL PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT**



## **SAFEGUARDING CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES.**

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# REGENT HOUSE PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT.

## Child Protection Policy.

The teaching, administrative and ancillary staff of the Preparatory Department are committed to a practice which protects pupils from harm. They recognise and accept their responsibilities under the Children (NI) Order 1995 about safe-guarding children.

### Aims.

To provide a secure, caring and supportive environment in which the basic rights of each individual are respected, protected and safe-guarded.

To create an atmosphere in which pupils feel confident and at liberty to share concerns.

To create amongst staff an awareness of the symptoms of possible child abuse and of the correct procedure for dealing with such.

To foster trust and good relationships with pupils and parents and to encourage parents to take all reasonable steps to secure a safe environment for their children outside school.

As well as statutory responsibilities in relation to pupils' learning, schools have a pastoral responsibility towards their pupils and the young people in their charge have a right to be protected from harm. It is therefore the policy of the Preparatory Department to safeguard and promote the welfare and safety of our pupils.

### Implementation.

In order to fulfil their responsibilities, all staff must –

- comply with the school guidelines on self-protection for staff
- have an awareness of the issues which cause children harm, including recognition and the symptoms of child abuse
- be familiar with the procedures for interviewing pupils about whom there are concerns and for reporting and recording this information
- follow the correct course of action as set out in the school's Child Protection procedures when abuse is suspected

### **Designated Teacher For Child Protection.**

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection in the Preparatory Department is Miss L Halliday.

### **Deputy Designated Teacher For Child Protection.**

The Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection in the Preparatory Department is Miss. A. Thompson.

If Miss L Halliday is unavailable, Miss. Thompson should be contacted.

### **Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher For Child Protection – Senior School.**

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection in the Senior School is Mrs. Julie Haugh. If Mrs. Haugh is unavailable, Mr. M. Carville (Principal and DDT), Mr. Andrew Matchett, (DDT) or Mrs. Julie Haugh, (DDT) should be contacted.

Daily contact with individual children enables all staff within the school community to observe outward symptoms of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour, learning patterns or development. These symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes, including bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances, or drug, alcohol or solvent abuse.

Training is given to all staff to enable them to carry out their responsibilities in relation to Child Protection.

### **School Counsellor.**

We have within the school a Pupil Counselling Service. The Counsellor liaises with Miss L Halliday, Head of the Preparatory Department. The Counselling Service recognises that while the commitment to confidentiality is a necessary part of the service, the guarantee of confidentiality cannot be absolute. The published statement on confidentiality refers to the occasions when the confidentiality agreement is set aside:

“exceptional circumstances in which the counsellor has good grounds for believing that a pupil is himself or herself in danger or will cause physical harm to himself/herself or to others, or when the school has a statutory or ethical obligation to notify parents or the authorities of illegal activity.”

Information regarding the Pupil Counselling service is displayed in the Preparatory Department.

### **PDMU**

The PDMU assemblies help to enable our pupils to recognise and deal with potentially dangerous situations.

### **The Role of The Designated Teacher.**

The EA considers that the ultimate responsibility lies with the Board of Governors and the Principal to ensure that all teaching and ancillary staff are aware of the EA procedures.

The Designated Teacher in the school should ensure that:

- all teaching and ancillary staff are aware of the EA procedures
- all staff know and understand what to do in cases of suspected abuse
- the Designated Board Officer and Social Services Officer are kept informed
- the Principal, Head of Department, teachers and the school's Education Welfare Officer are informed

### **The Role of The Deputy Designated Teacher.**

The role of the Deputy Designated Teacher is to support and undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection as required.

## Procedures for Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse.

A record of concern form should be completed.

When a case has been referred to the Designated Teacher (along with the record of concern), he/she should immediately inform the Principal. A decision will be made as to whether to refer the case to, or consult with, Social Services, or, where physical or sexual abuse is suspected or alleged, refer the case to the police.

The Principal will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

The Designated Officer of the Education and Library Board should also be notified.

When making a referral of a case of suspected or alleged abuse, the Designated Teacher should make sure that he or she is informed of the timing of the strategy discussion between the statutory agencies which will decide whether and how to investigate.

The Designated Teacher should be prepared to contribute to the discussion or to seek the help of the teacher who knows the child best.

In any case where a school has concerns about possible child abuse, it is important that a record is kept at all stages – this should indicate dates, notes, documents, events and action taken.

All records, notes and documents will be kept in a secure file by the Designated Teacher.

In cases of alleged child abuse which come to court, the court may require the school to provide full records on the child.

In the case of a Child in Need referral the parents will be contacted and their permission sought.

The EA's Child Protection officers will be kept informed in the case of any referral.

All staff have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals and investigating agencies and where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, a legal duty to do so. All staff must be aware that in cases where abuse is alleged, **NO PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY CAN OR SHOULD EVER BE GIVEN.**

## Procedures for Reporting Suspected Or Disclosed Child Abuse. (Contd.)

### Action to be taken:

If a child makes a disclosure:

- **Receive** the information calmly and accept what they are saying as the truth (**it is not our place to investigate**).
- **Reassure** the child.
- **Respond** – remember that we cannot promise confidentiality and tell the child what you might have to do next.
- **Record**
  - make notes as you go maintaining eye contact where possible and keep all originals and write ups
  - tell the child what you are doing
  - include time (start and finish), date and place
  - write a verbatim report as soon as possible
  - record seen non-verbal behaviour e.g. twisting hands
  - record any specific “pet” words used.
- **Refer**
  - report to the Designated Teacher who will take the matter on in accordance with school policy and procedure.

Clarification of concerns should be conducted by teaching staff. Non-teaching staff who have concerns should report the matter immediately to the Designated Teacher.

While discreet preliminary clarification from the child or his/her parent or carer may help to allay or confirm fears, it is NOT the responsibility of the education staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries.

On no account, at any time, should you ask a child to remove his or her clothing.

Staff should be aware that their notes of discussions with the child and the parents or carer may need to be used in subsequent court proceedings. Lack of proper records will not exempt the school from giving evidence, therefore accurate notes are important.

## **If There Are Signs of Possible Abuse:**

### **Record:**

- make clear notes of any signs or symptoms that you have noticed using non-emotional language
- any comment by the child or later by the parent or other adult as to how the injury occurred should be noted quoting the words actually used
- include dates and places, times and people present

### **Refer:**

- report to the Designated Teacher who will take the matter on in accordance with school policy and procedure

## **Reporting Procedures for A Parent.**

If a parent has concerns about the safety of a child, they may talk to:

- The Class Teacher
- The Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Miss L Halliday)
- Deputy Designated for Child Protection (Miss. A. Thompson)
- Mr. M. Carville (Principal)
- Mr. R. Johnston (The Chairperson of the Board of Governors)
- The Social Worker
- Care Unit (PSNI)

## **If an Adult Makes a Disclosure.**

If a parent, carer or other adult expresses concern to a member of staff suggesting abuse by someone outside the school, or by someone working in a voluntary capacity within the school, the person making the complaint must be informed that the information will be passed on to the Designated Teacher.

In such cases the Head of Department may seek clarification from the person making the complaint and consult with the child's class teacher.

Advice may also be sought from the EA Child Protection Team or Social Services before deciding on appropriate action.



## Staff Procedures.

In the event of a complaint being made about a member of staff, procedures will be followed exactly as outlined in the D.E.N.I. booklet "Child Protection" (pgs 21 – 31).

A Note of Concern will be completed.

The Head of Department, the Designated Teacher or the Principal will consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and seek advice from the EA Child Protection team.

If the complaint alleges misconduct by the Designated Teacher then the matter will be dealt with by the Head of the Preparatory Department, the Principal or the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Should the complaint allege misconduct by the Head of the Preparatory Department then the matter will be dealt with by the Headmaster and the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Where the Principal is suspected, the matter should be reported to the Designated Teacher who should report the matter immediately to Social Services or to the PSNI, the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and the Designated Officer at EA.

## Operation Encompass

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of the school safeguarding team. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 'Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools' and a note will be made in the child's child protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

Further information see [The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#).

## Categories of Child Abuse and Related Symptoms.

“Child abuse occurs in families from all social classes and cultures. Abusers come from all walks of life and all occupations and professions.... The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or of a failure on the part of the parent or carer to provide proper care or both.”

D.E.N.I. Circular 99/10

As members of the school community, all staff are well placed to observe the OUTWARD SYMPTOMS of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development.

It should be remembered that all symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes including bereavement, a change in family circumstances, or drug/alcohol/solvent misuse. However, staff must be aware that outward symptoms may also be due to child abuse.

Overleaf are some possible checklists for the different types of abuse. It is important to remember that these signs must be appreciated as a whole. Isolated examples of one or other of these signs do not necessarily suggest abuse. There is no definitive list, but evidence of a number of the following should alert your suspicions.

### Exploitation

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, engaging 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

## **Neglect.**

Neglect is 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 failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development.

*Signs may include:*

- constant hunger
- poor personal hygiene
- constant tiredness
- poor state of clothing
- emaciation
- frequent lateness or poor attendance at school
- untreated medical problems
- destructive tendencies
- low self-esteem
- neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking)
- no social relationships
- chronic running away
- compulsive stealing
- scavenging for food or clothes

## **Physical Abuse.**

This is the actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.

*Signs may include:*

- unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- refusal to discuss injuries
- untreated injuries
- admission of punishment which seems excessive
- fear of parents being contacted
- fear of physical contact
- flinching at sudden movements
- arms and legs covered in hot weather
- fear of returning home
- fear of medical help
- self destructive tendencies
- aggression towards others
- chronic running away

## Sexual Abuse.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve sexual 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.

*Signs may include:*

- isolation
- overly protective of siblings
- inappropriate sexualised behaviour and language
- physical injuries
- reluctance to go home
- promiscuity
- risky behaviours

## Emotional Abuse.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

*Signs may include:*

- physical, mental and emotional development delay
- admission of punishment which seems excessive
- over-reaction to mistakes
- sudden speech disorders
- fear of new situations
- inappropriate emotional responses to stressful situations
- neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking)
- self-mutilation
- fear of parents being contacted
- extremes of passivity or aggression
- drug/solvent abuse
- chronic running away
- compulsive stealing
- scavenging for food or clothes
- enuresis/encopresis (bedwetting/soiling)

These signs and symptoms do no more than give rise for concern. They are not proof of abuse and alternative explanations may exist for them. However, it is the concerns that must be reported to the Designated Teacher. Where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, all staff have a legal duty to report this.

### **Bullying.**

Bullying also constitutes a form of abuse by another child or young person, although it would not normally trigger the Child Protection procedures. Bullying can be described as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend himself/herself. The main types are physical, verbal, cyber-bullying or indirect e.g. spreading rumours or excluding someone from social groups. If unchecked, it can be profoundly damaging to the victim and may disrupt or impair the capacity to learn. Symptoms may include behaviour change, lack of concentration, marked deterioration in schoolwork or absenteeism.

A separate policy on bullying is available.

All staff must safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in their charge. Implicit in this is the assumption that the conduct of school staff towards pupils must be above reproach.

As well as the more obvious physical or sexual abuse, members of staff should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse, such as persistent sarcasm, verbal bullying or severe and persistent negative comments or actions. Members of staff are encouraged to reflect on every aspect of their contact with children which may give rise to perceptions or allegations of this form of abuse.

### **Internet and Digital Technologies.**

An “Acceptable Use of the Internet and Technologies” policy that fulfils the criteria set out by DENI. has been devised. An “e-learning” policy that explains why and how the children can collaborate online through Learning NI in a safe and controlled way has also been put in place. Permission will be sought from parents on an annual basis on accessing the internet in school.

### **Drugs Policy.**

A drugs policy in accordance with “Drugs: Guidance for Schools in Northern Ireland 2004” is being updated. The policy will follow the guidance given in the EA Drug Policy Document.

### **Vetting Procedures.**

Background checks on school staff follow the guidelines set out by the Department of Education.

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF. (GUIDELINES FOR SELF PROTECTION).

1. Treat everyone with respect.
2. Members of staff should reflect on every aspect of their contact with children which may give rise to perceptions or allegations of any form of abuse. The use of social networking and the sharing of mobile phone numbers between staff and pupils is strongly discouraged. It is recommended that staff use more secure methods of contact such as C2K e-mail, Learning NI or the school mobile phone.
3. Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with one pupil away from other people. If it is necessary to conduct an individual interview ensure that the interview is conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or an area which is likely to be frequented by other people. If these conditions cannot apply you are advised to ensure that another adult is informed that the interview is taking place. Where possible another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.
4. If you must physically restrain a child for any reason, the absolute minimum force necessary should be used and is only permissible when you are certain that a child is at imminent risk of endangering himself, herself, yourself, others or property. Be aware that it could be misinterpreted as assault.
5. In the course of their teaching, teachers may come into physical contact with their pupils, for example, when showing a pupil how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment or while demonstrating an exercise during P.E. Teachers should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted by the pupil.
6. Do not use inappropriate language or act in an over familiar manner with pupils.
7. In the event of injury to a child, ensure that it is recorded and the details witnessed by another adult.
8. Keep records of any false allegations a child makes against you or other staff members. Keep records of times and dates and if possible ask another adult to witness the allegation.
9. Following any incident where a teacher feels that his/her actions have been or could be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to both the Head of Prep. and also to the Principal of the school.
10. Administer First Aid in the presence of another adult or child. (Except in an emergency).
11. If you take children on journeys, always have two children along where possible. If it is an overnight trip, always check the rooms in pairs with a teaching colleague.
12. If you are in a holiday or residential setting, never, under any circumstances, take a pupil or pupils into your room.
13. When taking children on journeys, all members of staff should carry identification.
14. Do not use your mobile phone in class unless it is an emergency.
15. Do not take photographs of pupils or use photographs of pupils in publications unless permission has been given by parents or guardians.
16. Never keep suspicions of abuse or inappropriate behaviour by a colleague to yourself. If there is ever an attempted cover-up, you could be implicated by your silence.
17. Ensure that you have the opportunity to discuss your own feelings, if possible with other members of staff and ask for help when in doubt about how to handle a situation. If you feel an action on your part could be misinterpreted, please report it in writing to the Head of the Preparatory Department – Miss L Halliday.
18. Teachers should avoid using teaching material which might be misinterpreted. When using teaching material of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. Schools have received advice on the importance of consulting parents and governors when using materials such as the Aids education for schools and the sex education programmes.

It is important to remember that attitudes, demeanour and language all require care. The needs of the children must at all times remain of paramount importance.

## Appendix 1

### How To Make A Complaint.

