



St. Anthony's P.S

Child Protection Policy

Date Ratified by Board of Governors: _____

Updated: January 2026

Reviewed: **January 2028**

Signature of Chair of Governors: _____

Signature of Principal: _____

"Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, they must be kept safe from harm, and they must be given proper care by those looking after them". (U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 19.)

"When adults or organisations make decisions which affect children, they must always think first about what would be best for the child". (U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3.)

What do we mean by 'child abuse'?

A child under the age of 17 who has suffered from:

- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse

Which the person who had custody, charge or care of the child either caused or knowingly failed to prevent.

Under Section 5(1) of the Criminal Law Act (N.I.) 1967 anyone who knows or believes that an arrestable offence has been committed, and has information which is likely to secure the arrest of the person responsible, has a duty to give that information to the police, failure to do so is in itself an offence. Physical and sexual abuses are arrestable offences.

Under the "Protocol for Joint Investigations" established between the Police and Social Services, where either agency receives a report that a child is at risk, the other is automatically informed.

If the school has a general concern about the welfare or safety of a child we should, in the first instance, contact social services. The school should not speak to the parent.

Definitions of Abuse

- **Neglect**
Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to cause significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive.
- **Physical abuse**
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, suffocation, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriate giving drugs to control behaviour.

- **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact. Non contact activities may also be involved, 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**

Emotional abuse is the persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe, adverse effects on their behaviour and emotional development. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment; this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.

Identifying abuse

It is always preferable to prevent abuse or for intervention to take place at the earliest possible stage. All school staff are well placed to observe outward symptoms which may be due to child abuse.

Signs and symptoms:

- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment which is needed
- Incompatible explanations
- A series of minor injuries
- Unexplained bruising
 - in and around the mouth
 - black eyes - especially if both eyes are black and there is no bruising
 - to forehead or nose
 - grasp marks
 - finger marks
 - bruising of the ears
 - linear bruising (particularly buttocks or back)
 - differing age bruising
- Bite marks
- Burns and scalds
- Cigarette burns
- General physical disability
- Unresponsiveness in the child
- Soiling and wetting
- Change in behavioural pattern
- Frozen look
- Attention seeking
- Apprehension
- Anti-social behaviour
- Unkempt appearance
- Sexually precocious behaviour
- Sexualised drawings and play
- Sudden poor performance in school
- Poor self esteem
- Self mutilation
- Withdrawal

Child Protection Policy

- Running away
- Reluctance to return home after school
- Resistance to undressing for PE
- Resistance to school medicals
- Difficulty in forming relationships
- Confusing affectionate displays
- Poor attendance - repeated infections etc.
- Excessive dependence
- Poor growth

No list of symptoms can be exhaustive. They may give rise to concern but are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred.

Where a member of staff is concerned that abuse may have occurred, he or she must report this immediately to the designated teacher who has specific responsibility for child protection.

All staff should recognise that, in order to protect children from harm, cases may arise where confidentiality must be subordinated to the need to take appropriate action, by involving others, in the child's best interest.

No promise of confidentiality can or should be given where abuse is alleged.

Procedures

The First Step

- Where teachers see signs that cause them concern they should seek some clarification from the child, with tact and understanding.
- Where another member of the school staff sees signs, he or she should immediately bring them to the attention of either the class teacher or the designated teacher so that the necessary clarification can be carried out by the teacher.
- Care must be taken in asking and interpreting the child's responses to questions about indication of abuse.
- Staff should be aware that the way in which they talk to a child could have an effect on the evidence, which may be put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings.

Guidelines for Questioning

- Never ask leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind.
- Do not ask questions that would encourage the child to change his or her version of events in any way or which would impose your own assumptions e.g. "Tell me what happened" as opposed to "Did they do X to you?"
- Listen to the child. Do not interrupt if he or she is freely recalling significant events. Make a note of the discussion to pass on to the designated teacher. The note should record time, date, place and people who were present and what

Child Protection Policy

was said. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail or sketched. Under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed.

- Any comment by the child, or subsequently by a parent or other adult, about how an injury occurred should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, preferably quoting words actually used.
- Do not give the child undertakings of confidentiality but reassure the child that information will only be disclosed to those professionals who need to know.
- Notes of the discussion may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings.
- Be sensitive to what a child says, treat it seriously and value what they say.

While discreet preliminary clarification from the child, parent or other carer will often help to confirm or allay concerns; it is not the responsibility of teachers to carry out investigations, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers. All staff in school are trained to follow guidance by SELB and CPSSS when responding to disclosure and dealing with children: Receive; Reassure; Respond; Record Refer.

Referral and the Role of the Designated Teacher

See Appendix1

Designated Teacher: Mrs H. Hamill

Deputy Designated Teacher: Mrs E. Girvan

Deputy Designated Teacher: Mrs L Frater (Nursery)

- In all cases where abuse is suspected or where an allegation has been made by a pupil or a third party that abuse has taken place, or where serious concerns exist about the welfare of a child, teachers and other members of staff should report the information to the Designated Teacher.
- The Designated Teacher should not speak to the parents.
- The Designated Teacher should immediately refer these cases to or consult with Social Services.
- Where physical or sexual abuse is suspected or alleged, refer the case to the Police, and notify the Principal.
- Contact with or referral to Social Services will not automatically trigger a Child Protection investigation; however, it may result in an investigation whether or not the teacher intended a formal referral.
- Any allegation by a child that he or she is suffering or has suffered abuse should immediately trigger the reporting procedures.
- The Principal should be alerted immediately to a case and should be kept informed by the Designated Teacher.
- Where the Designated Teacher is suspected of abuse, the Principal should be informed immediately and the normal reporting procedures should be investigated.

Child Protection Policy

- Where the Principal is suspected of abuse, the Designated Teacher should report the matter to Social Services, the Police and the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.
- When making a referral, the Designated Teacher should be informed of the timing of the strategy discussion between the statutory agencies, which will decide whether and how to investigate. Clarify when, how and by whom the parents and the child will be told that a referral has been made.
- The Designated Teacher or a teacher who knows the child well should be prepared to contribute to the strategy discussion regarding the school's knowledge of the child.

Prospective parents are informed of Child Protection and Pastoral Care Procedures at the Nursery Welcome Talk in June. Existing parents are provided with a brochure annually at their child's parent teacher meeting. These brochures are also available at the school office.

Making a referral is a serious decision. Advice, information and guidance may be sought from the Principal, a senior member of staff or the class teacher. Advice and support are also available from: -

- Children's Services
 - 028 2563 5640 (out of hours: 028 9446 8833)
- Social Services Gateway Team
 - 028 38343011
- NSPCC Childline
 - 0800 800500 0800 1111
- The Clinical Medical Officer
 - 028 2564 2181
- The School Nurse Pauline Graham
 - 028 38311405
- EANI Designated Officers
 - 028 38341975
- EANI Welfare Officer Caroline Reilly
 - 028 38326801
- EANI Psychologist Wendy Hodgett
 - 028 38351480
- PSNI Care Unit
 - 028 38315274

Reports will be made available to the parents at the Child Protection Conference and may be used in court. *Use of translated documents and/or interpreter should be made available if necessary.*

All reports should be checked and signed by the designated teacher or her deputy.

Reports for Child Protection Conferences:

- should focus on child's educational progress and achievements, attendance, behaviour, participation, relationships with other children and adults within the school and where appropriate the child's appearance. (See appendix 2)
- if relevant, should include what is already known about the child's relations with his or her family and the family structure.
- should be objective and based on evidence.
- should contain only fact, observations and reasons for concern.

Reports will be made available to the parents at the Child Protection Conference and may be used in court. All reports should be checked and signed by the designated teacher or her deputy.

Aims of St. Anthony's Primary School regarding Child Protection

By following the correct procedures we –

- Care for the child.
- Care for our school.
- Care for the community we serve.
- Respond to the guidelines and procedures of other agencies.

Our Nurture Unit

St. Anthony's has a Nurture Unit called "The Sunshine Room," this opened on the 10th May 2021. The Sunshine Room is designed for children whose developmental needs (social, emotional and behavioural) are such that at times they may need additional support in a smaller group. The children are supported in a classroom which has been equipped with a range of suitable resources and where staff have been trained to provide the children with a variety of experiences, opportunities and approaches to help address their specific needs. The nurture group staff will also follow the school staff code of conduct, child protection and other safeguarding policies.

We realise the important role teachers' play in identifying potential cases of child abuse. All staff have total commitment to child protection. We endeavour to raise children's awareness about themselves and to develop a trusting climate in which our children feel able to talk and share their thoughts and feelings.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Private Meetings with Pupils:

All staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. There will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place, but, where possible, such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff is advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. Where possible, another pupil or another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

Physical Contact with Pupils:

As a general principle all staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with pupils. This is particularly the case with maturing children of primary school age. Physical contact which may be misconstrued by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided. Such contact can include well intentioned informal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulders or arm, which could be misconstrued. There may be occasions when a distressed child needs to be comforted and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases, to ensure that what is, and what is seen by others present, to be normal and natural, does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time.

Some teachers/coaches are likely to come into physical contact with their pupils from time to time in the course of their teaching, e.g. during P.E. All staff 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.

Staff who have to administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact in the circumstances could be misconstrued.

Following any incident where any 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 of the school. This would apply especially in a case where a member of staff had been obliged to restrain a child physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or self-injury.

Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils on school excursions and residential trips 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 environment.

Complaints Against a Member of Staff

Any complaint made that a member of staff has abused a pupil is thoroughly investigated through the normal child protection procedures. It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that these procedures are followed. In a case where the Principal is the subject of a complaint, it is the responsibility of the chairman of the Board of Governors to ensure that procedures are followed. A representative of the school should be involved by the investigating agencies as soon as possible, as long as this does not prejudice the pursuit of the investigation. The member of staff, against whom the complaint or allegation has been made, must also be informed of the allegations.

Procedures for investigating and dealing with such complaints, within the normal child protection procedures should be in line with the employer's disciplinary procedure, including recourse to suspension in appropriate cases: suspension is, in law a neutral act.

School authorities must notify the Department of Education of any instance where a teacher is dismissed on grounds of gross misconduct, so that his/her continued recognition as a teacher can be considered.

Intimate Care

St. Anthony's School includes three Nursery units and two Learning Support Classes. There are also seven Foundation Stage classes. We recognise that there may be occasions when staff may be involved in the intimate care of children. Intimate care can be defined as an activity required meeting the personal care needs of an individual child. This can include:

- Washing
- Dressing / undressing
- Toileting

When intimate care support is necessary, staff will always inform the teacher or other staff member of the care to be given. Where children need to be changed in toilets or private rooms another staff member should always be nearby and the door unlocked. Staff will be aware of the need to maintain privacy and dignity when dealing with intimate personal care needs. Consent forms will be signed by the parents/carers of the child. The Nursery Units and Learning Support Classes maintain Intimate Care

policies appropriate to the age, stage and development of the children in their care.

Employment of Substitute Teachers:

Substitute teachers will only be employed by the school if they are on the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register (NISTR) as detailed in DENI Circular 2007/07

Criminal Background Checking of Staff in Schools:

All staff or voluntary helpers within our school will be subject to a criminal background check to ensure suitability for access to children as detailed in DENI Circular 2006/09.

Extended Schools:

At least one member of the Safeguarding Team in school, will be present while Extended Schools Activities involving children are taking place.

Photographic Images:

As a school which celebrates all aspects of school life, we may wish to take photographs of activities and events that involve your child. The photographs may be used for displays, publications, by the SELB or by local newspapers. Each year a consent form will be sent out to be signed by parents. We are aware that many parents wish to photograph or film their children's performances at school. Following advice by Child protection services, filming is permitted unless permission has been withheld by parents of individual children within the group. Parents are cautioned not to share images filmed on social networking or other internet sites.

St. Anthony's Primary School recognises the importance of a partnership between home and school but where issues of child abuse or suspected child abuse arise; our first and only responsibility is to the child.

We may not be able to prevent child abuse but by following Child Protection procedures, we will try our best to protect all our children and this is our prime objective.

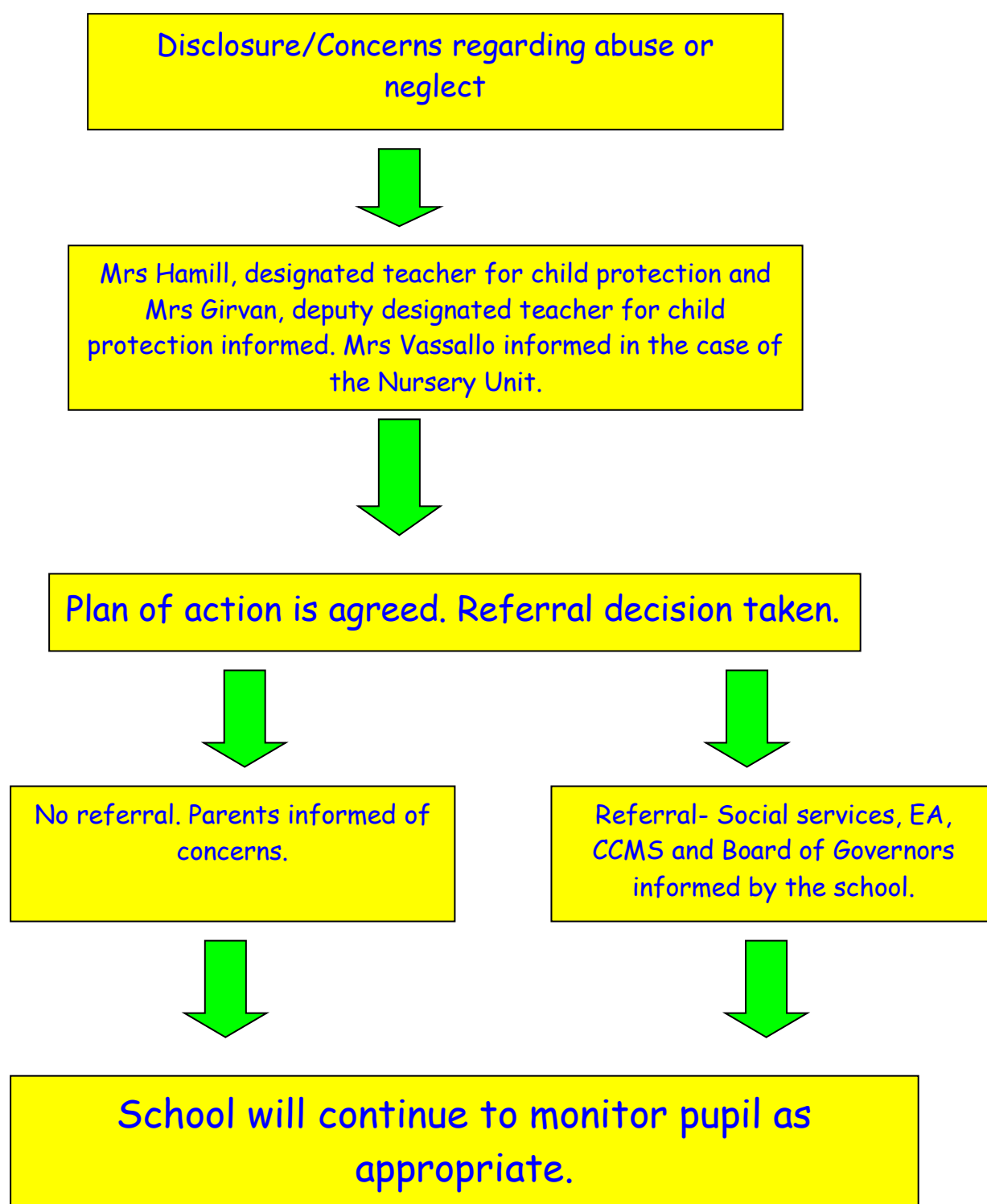
The school will maintain a record of children causing concern and who need to be monitored. Teachers are kept informed of any child in their class who is on this list. The Principal will be kept informed of any children being monitored.

St. Anthony's Primary School follows procedures to promote the safety of children on school outings by ensuring that Risk Assessment procedures are followed prior to any class trips or outings.

Child Protection Policy

In the unlikely event of Mrs Hamill, Mrs Girvan or Mrs Frater not being available, any emergency involving Child Protection issues will be referred to a member of the Senior Management Team.

This policy will be reviewed and updated every two years.



Appendix 2



St. Anthony's PS School Report to Social Services

Case Conference/ Case Planning/ LAC Review

Name: _____ **DOB:** _____ **Class** _____

Address:

Enrolment Date: _____ **Attendance:** _____

Attainment:

Work Presentation/Homework:

Behaviour – in class

Behaviour – out of class

Relationships – with peers:

With teacher/ other adults:

School's contact with home:

General Remarks:

Appendix 3



St. Anthony's Primary School Safeguarding Team

Chairman, Board of Governors:	Mr Fergal Lennon
Representative for Child Protection Board of Governors:	Mrs Stacy Brennan
School Principal:	Mr Patrick Mallon
Designated Teacher for Child Protection:	Mrs Helen Hamill
Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection:	Ms Eleanor Girvan
Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection:	Mrs Louise Frater