

SHIMNA INTEGRATED COLLEGE

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

2025-2026

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If any parent, member of staff or student, has concerns about the possible abuse or the welfare of a child, those concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, the Principal or the Deputy Designated Teachers by calling the College Office and requesting an urgent call back on a safeguarding matter.

Principal: Steve Pagan

Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Karen Caulfield

Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection: Suzy Dillon & Stuart Scott

1. Introduction

The care, welfare and safety of the students in our charge is our responsibility as staff, and we will carry out this duty through our pastoral care policy and by providing a caring, supportive, productive, dynamic and safe learning environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. We help our students to learn about the risks of possible abuse, to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and to acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or harm to a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school.

All members of the college staff and volunteers are subject to appropriate background checks (AccessNI). The employees of all contractors recommended by the Education Authority for providing services in our college have been AccessNI checked. All contractors employed by the college and their employees will operate according to the college's child protection procedures. It should be noted that the college sends a child protection statement to all contractors prior to them coming on site to carry out work. The staff has also adopted a Code of Practice regarding their behaviour towards students **[See Appendix 1]**. The purpose of the procedures is to protect students by ensuring that everyone who works in the college - teachers, support staff and volunteers - has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a student is suspected. The overriding concern of all adults in the college must be the care, welfare and safety of each student. All staff are aware that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

We recognise child abuse to include neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exploitation and bullying. The college has a comprehensive policy on bullying, indicating the seriousness with which staff take this form of abuse.

2. Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, "Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland" (DOH, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools" (DENI Circular 2017/04)

and the Safeguarding Board for NI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

The following Principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy:

- the child or young person's welfare is paramount;
- the voice of the child or young person should be heard;
- parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together;
- partnership;
- prevention;
- responses should be proportionate to the circumstances;
- protection; and
- evidence based and informed decision making.

3. Related Policies

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. The child protection policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies which are reviewed at least every three years, including:

- Addressing-Bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints policy
- Data protection Policy
- Educational Visits

- E-Safety Policy
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Records Management policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Special Educational Needs
- Mobile Device Free Policy
- Drugs
- Managing critical incidents
- Intimate Care
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Whistleblowing

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing to have a copy should contact the college office or visit the school website at www.shimnaintegratedcollege.org

4. Aims of the Policy:

- To ensure that staff act in the best interests of the child at all times;
- To inform all staff of the statutory requirements in the event of suspected or alleged child abuse;
- To provide all staff with the definitions of different forms of abuse;
- To provide guidelines on the possible signs of abuse;
- To enable parent(s)/carer(s) to make a complaint or a report of child abuse if necessary;
- To provide clear procedures for staff to follow in a case of suspected abuse;
- To explain the roles and obligations of staff involved in the reporting of suspected abuse;
- To provide guidelines for the protection of staff when dealing with students.

- To provide support for staff to cope with the anxieties of initial reporting, and the aftermath of involvement in suspected abuse;
- To help create a protective and supportive environment for all students and staff.

5. Safeguarding Team

- Chair of the Board of Governors – **Denise Medea**
- Designated Governor for Child Protection: **Michelle Hamilton**
- Designated Teacher for Child Protection - **Karen Caulfield**
- Principal – **Steve Pagan**
- Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection – **Suzy Dillon & Stuart Scott**
- Pastoral Care Manager - **Danella Goodman**
- Child Protection Trainer - **Aine Harrison**
- Resilience Lead – **Ciaran Milligan**

The SEEA designated officers can be contacted at **SEEA HQ, Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast BT 16 2HS. Telephone 02895 985590 Fax 9056 6377**

6. Roles and Responsibilities of the Safeguarding Team

Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher:

Every school is required to appoint a Designated Teacher with responsibility for Child Protection. They must also appoint a Deputy Designated Teacher who as a member of the Safeguarding team will actively support the Designated Teacher in carrying out the following duties:

- to liaise with other members of staff as required to help address specific issues, particularly the pastoral manager and form teachers;
- to liaise with the EA designated officers for child protection;
- lead responsibility for the development and review of the college's child protection policy;
- to promote a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the college;
- to provide written reports to the Board of Governors regarding child protection matters;
- to liaise with the external support agencies such as the Education Welfare Service, Social Services, CAMHS, family support hubs and the PSNI and voluntary agencies such as the NSPCC, Barnardos and Save the Children;
- to make referrals to social services or PSNI where appropriate;

- to attend LAC reviews and social services case conferences for the purposes of sharing information;
- to respond to updates of DE circulars relating to child protection;
- to liaise with the child protection trainer to organise the induction and training of all school staff;
- to act as a child protection, contact point for staff, parents and the community;
- to keep the Principal informed of all child protection matters;
- to be responsible for record keeping of all child protection concerns.
- To ensure staff are aware that Notes of Concern should be completed using the template provided in DE circular 2020/07

Deputy Designated Teachers

- to work cooperatively with the designated teacher in fulfilling her/his responsibilities;
- to undertake the duties of the designated teacher when required.

Principal

- as secretary to the Board of Governors, assist in fulfilling its safeguarding and child protection duties;
- ensure the Board of Governors are kept fully informed of all developments relating to safeguarding including changes to legislation, policy, procedures, DE circulars, inclusion of child protection on the termly meeting agenda;
- to manage allegations / complaints against school staff;
- to establish and manage the operational systems for safeguarding and child protection;
- to appoint and manage designated teacher/deputy designated teachers who are enabled to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities;
- to ensure safe and effective recruitment and selection including awareness of safeguarding and child protection for new staff and volunteers;
- ensure that parents and students receive a copy or summary of the child protection policy at intake and at a minimum every 2 years; and
- to maintain the schools record of child abuse complaints.

Board of Governors

- 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;

- the school has a child protection policy which is reviewed annually and parents and students 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;
- 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 (currently under review);
- 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; and
- the relevant safeguarding information and guidance is disseminated to all staff and governors with opportunities to discuss requirements and impact on roles and responsibilities.

Chair of Board of Governors

- has a pivotal role in creating and maintaining a safeguarding ethos;
- receives training from CPSS and HR;
- assumes lead responsibility in the event of a CP complaint or concern about the Principal; and
- ensures compliance with legislation, Child Protection record keeping and policies.

Designated Governor for Child Protection

Advises the board of 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 teachers report; and
- recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff.

Pastoral Manager

- to liaise with staff on safeguarding matters;
- to communicate with external agencies, including local suicide prevention services, social services, PSNI, the EWO, Ardmore Outreach and EOTAS centres;

- to collate student reports for Social Services;
- to update the internal pastoral briefing when necessary;
- to offer support and a safe space to students in distress following the ASIST model;
- to manage the Listening Ear Service in school; and
- to work with the school counsellor as key contact and liaise with parents/carers and students.

Child Protection Trainer

- to provide child protection training for staff, students and governors;
- to train the Listening Ear team of staff and students.

Other members of school staff

- members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures initially to the designated teacher for child protection or to the deputy designated teacher if she is not available;
- class teachers and form teachers should complete the note of concern if there are safeguarding concerns such as: 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 student abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse;
- **staff should not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, should not investigate nor should they ask leading questions.

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;

if their child is absent and should send in a note on the child's return to school.

This assures the school that the parent/carer knows about the absence. The Department of Education recently published **Circular 2023/02 - Parental Responsibility: Updated Guidance for Schools** to:

Parental Responsibility: Updated Guidance for Schools to:

- inform schools about the law on parental responsibility as it currently stands, in light of legislative changes; and
- advise on the action required by schools in respect of a person or persons who acquire parental responsibility for a student.

The Circular can be accessed at [Parental Responsibility: Updated Guidance for Schools](#)

- **It is essential that we have up to date contact details for the parent/carer of every child in our care**

7. Definition of Abuse:

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse. The definition of signs and symptoms of abuse are taken from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI (October 2024)

Although the harm from abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

(Ref: 2.6, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. March 2016)

Child abuse occurs in families from all social classes and cultures and it also occurs in agencies and organisations. Abusers come from all walks of life and all occupations and professions. The following is an extract from "Co-operating to Protect Children"; (DHSS Guidance and Regulations).

“Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger, who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or provide proper care, or both. The abuse may take a number of forms, including;

- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation

See Appendix 2 for definitions. Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm.

8. Types of Abuse

Grooming of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child’s/young person’s loyalty and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

If the staff in Shimna Integrated College become aware of signs that may indicate grooming, they will take early action and follow the school’s child protection policies and procedures.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it

can also occur through the use of technology. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017)

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible ‘rewards’ OR ‘benefits’ such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging.

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. The abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis.

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the school’s child protection policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

Domestic and Sexual violence and abuse can have a profoundly negative effect on a child’s emotional, psychological and social well-being. A child does not have to witness domestic violence to be adversely affected by it. Living in a violent or abusive domestic environment is harmful to children.

Domestic violence and abuse is defined as ‘threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.’ Sexual Violence and Abuse is defined as ‘any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual /online perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) without their informed consent or understanding.’ (Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy: March 2016).

If it comes to the attention of school staff that Domestic Abuse, is or may be, affecting a child this will be passed on to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as ‘cutting’, ‘female circumcision’ and ‘initiation’. The practice is medically unnecessary,

extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. FGM is a form of child abuse and, as such, teachers have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, through agreed established procedures set out in our school policy.

Forced Marriage A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in Shimna Integrated College we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

9. E safety/Internet abuse

Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, making comments on social media posts, social environments and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

In January 2014, the SBNI published its report 'An exploration of e-safety messages to young people, parents and practitioners in Northern Ireland' which identified the associated risks around online safety under four categories:

- **Content risks:** the child or young person is exposed to harmful material.
- **Contact risks:** the child or young person participates in adult initiated online activity.
- **Conduct risks:** the child or young person is a perpetrator or victim in peer-to-peer exchange.
- **Commercial risks:** the child or young person is exposed to inappropriate commercial advertising, marketing schemes or hidden costs.

We in Shimna Integrated College have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of students accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching students how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, students should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The school's actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding and promoting students' welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the students in the school or on school-organised activities.

Sexting is the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, videos or livestreams via mobile or over the internet via email, social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. There are two aspects to Sexting:

Sexting between individuals in a relationship schools should look at this individually. Whilst their procedures should be the same as below, they may want to include something specific here re what their preventative curriculum approach will be.

Students need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual relationship) and in these cases we will contact local police on 101 for advice and guidance. We may also seek advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service. Please be aware that, while offences may technically have been committed by the child/children involved, the matter will be dealt with sensitively and considering all of the circumstances and it is not necessarily the case that they will end up with a criminal record. It is important that particular care is taken in dealing with any such cases. Adopting scare tactics may discourage a young person from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of a sexual image.

Sharing an inappropriate image with an intent to cause distress

If a student has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that it is **not forwarded to anyone else**. Schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted) to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent.

If a young person has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further, whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures of the school will be followed.

10. Children with Increased Vulnerabilities

Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English and sexual orientation.

- **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 are aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult. Staff are aware of the need to identify and refer concerns early in order to allow preventative action to be taken.

- **Children with limited fluency in English**

As with children with a special educational need, children who are not fluent in English should be given the chance 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.

If a concern arises, the designated teachers will work with the SEN co-ordinator and if required, seek advice from the EA's Inclusion and Diversity Service to identify and respond to any particular communication needs that a child may have. We work hard to create an atmosphere in which students with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or students for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them.

- **Looked After Children**

In consultation with other agencies and professionals, a Health and Social Care Trust may determine that a child or young person's welfare cannot be safeguarded if they remain at home. In these circumstances, a child may be accommodated through a voluntary arrangement with the persons with parental responsibility for the child or the HSCT may make an application to the Court for a Care Order to place the child or young person in an alternative placement provided by the Trust. The HSCT will then make arrangements for the child to be looked after, either permanently or temporarily. It is important that the views of children, young people and their parents and/or others with parental responsibility for the child are taken into account when decisions are made.

A member of school staff will attend LAC meetings and will provide a written report. Where necessary, school support will be put in place for the child/young person. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a need to know basis.

- **Children / young people who go missing**

Children and young people who go missing come from all backgrounds and communities and are known to be at greater risk of harm. This includes risks of being sexually abused or exploited although children and young people may also become homeless or a victim or perpetrator of crime. Those who go missing from their family home may have no involvement with services as not all children and young people who run away or go missing from their family home have underlying issues within the family, or are reported to the police as missing.

The patterns of going missing may include overnight absences or those who have infrequent unauthorised absences of short time duration. When a child or young person returns, having been missing for a period, we should be alert to the possibility that they may have been harmed and to any behaviours or relationships or other indicators that children and young people may have been abused.

School staff will work in partnership with those who look after the child or young person who goes missing and, if appropriate, will complete a risk assessment. Current school policies will apply e.g. attendance, safeguarding, relationships and sexuality education.

- **Young people in supported accommodation**

Staff will work in partnership with those agencies involved with young people leaving care and those living in supported accommodation and will provide pastoral support as necessary.

- **Young people who are homeless**

If we become aware that a young person in our school is homeless, we will share this information with Social Services whose role is to carry out a comprehensive needs and risk assessment. We will contribute to the assessment and attend multi-disciplinary meetings.

- **Separated, unaccompanied and trafficked children and young people**

Separated children and young people are those who have been separated from their parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver.

Unaccompanied children and young people are those seeking asylum without the presence of a legal carer. Consideration must be given to the fact that separated or unaccompanied children may be a victim of human trafficking.

Child Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child or young person, whether by force or not, by a third person or group, for the purpose of different types of exploitation.

If we become aware of a child or young person who may be separated, unaccompanied or a victim of human trafficking we in Shimna Integrated College will immediately follow our safeguarding and child protection procedures.

- **Children of parents with additional support needs**

Children and young people can be affected by the disability of those caring for them. Parents, carers or siblings with disabilities may have additional support needs which impact on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the family, possibly affecting their education or physical and emotional development. It is important that any action school staff take to safeguard children and young people at risk of harm in these circumstances encompasses joint working between specialist disability and children's social workers and other professionals and agencies involved in providing services to adult family members. This will assist us in ensuring the welfare of the children and young people in the family is promoted and they are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

Where it is known or suspected that parents or carers have impaired ability to care for a child, the safeguarding team will give consideration to the need for a child protection response in addition to the provision of family support and intervention.

- **Gender identity issues and sexual orientation**

Young people from the LGBTQ community may face particular difficulties which could make them more vulnerable to harm. These difficulties could range from intolerance and homophobic bullying from others to difficulties for the young person themselves in exploring and understanding their sexuality. At such times young people may be more vulnerable to predatory advances from adults seeking to exploit or abuse them. This could impede a young person's ability or willingness to raise concerns if they feel they are at risk or leave young people exposed to contact with people who would exploit them.

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.

11. Children/young people's behaviours

• Peer Abuse

Children and young people may be at risk of physical, sexual and emotional bullying and abuse by their peers. Such abuse should always be taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. Where a child or young person has been harmed by another, all school staff should be aware of their responsibilities in relation to both children and young people who perpetrate the abuse as well as those who are victims of it and, where necessary, should contribute to an inter-disciplinary and multi-agency response.

• Self-Harm

Self-harm encompasses a wide range of behaviours and things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way, which are damaging. It may indicate a temporary period of emotional pain or distress, or deeper mental health issues which may result in the development of a progressive pattern of worsening self-harm that may ultimately result in death by misadventure or suicide. Self-harm may involve abuse of substances such as alcohol or drugs, including both illegal and/or prescribed drugs.

Self-harming behaviours may indicate that a child or young person has suffered abuse; however, this is not always the case. School staff should share concerns about a child or young person who is self-harming with a member of the safeguarding team who will seek advice from appropriately qualified and experienced professionals including those in the non-statutory sector to make informed assessments of risk in relation to self-harming behaviours.

• Suicidal Ideation

Staff will act without delay if they have concerns about a child or young person who presents as being suicidal as it is important that children and young people who communicate thoughts of suicide or engage in para-suicidal behaviours are seen urgently by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, including those in the non-statutory sector, to ensure they are taken seriously, treated with empathy, kindness and understanding and informed assessments of risk and needs can be completed as a matter of priority.

12. Children who display harmful sexual behaviour

What is harmful sexual behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour is an umbrella term for sexual behaviours which are of concern and have or are likely to cause harm to the individual themselves or to others. It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours – these can be defined as ‘normal’, ‘inappropriate’, ‘problematic’, ‘abusive’ or ‘violent’.

Healthy Sexual Behaviour may include some of the following characteristics:

- Mutual
- Consensual
- Exploratory and age appropriate
- Not intended to cause harm
- Fun / humorous
- Without power differentials

Problematic Sexual Behaviour may include some of the following characteristics:

- Not age appropriate
- One off incident of low-key touching over clothes
- Result of peer pressure
- Spontaneous rather than planned
- Lacking in other balancing factors e.g. no intent to cause harm, level of understanding, acceptance of responsibility
- Targeting other children, to irritate and make them feel uncomfortable. Often the children are not scared and can feel free to tell someone
- Concerning to parents / carers, sometimes involving substances which disinhibit behaviours

Problematic sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. For example, a one-off incident may simply require liaising with parents on setting clear direction that the behaviour is unacceptable, explaining boundaries and providing information and education. However, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice will be sought from the Education Authority CPSS. The CPSS will advise if additional advice from PSNI or Social Services is required.

Harmful (abusive/violent) Sexual Behaviour may include some of the following characteristics:

- Lacks the consent of the victim
- When the perpetrator uses threats or violence (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce or intimidate the victim
- Uses age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases

- Involves inappropriate touching
- Involves sexual behaviour between children – it is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not.
- **Involves a younger child abusing an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled.**
- In the case of a student displaying harmful sexual behaviour, the designated teacher or Principal will contact the CPSS for support and advice on the appropriate course of action to take. The CPSS will support the Principal and designated teacher for child protection in managing the process, completing a risk assessment and Risk Assessment Management Plan and communicating with partner agencies where appropriate (primarily Social Services, the Youth Justice Agency and the PSNI). Any incidents of HSB will be dealt with as per DE Circular 2022/02.

13. Child Abuse Complaints and Referral Procedures

All complaints in relation to suspected or alleged child abuse made against students, staff members, or someone other than a staff member e.g. volunteer or member of the Board of Governors, will be treated seriously. The procedures for dealing with such complaints are set out clearly in the guidance provided by the Department of Education. The college will rigorously follow these procedures.

Referral procedures are displayed throughout the school.

14. How a parent/carers can raise a concern?

In Shimna Integrated College we aim to work closely with parents/carers in supporting all aspects of their child's development and well-being.

Any concerns a parent/carers may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent/carers has a concern, they can talk to the form teacher, the designated teacher for child protection or the Principal.

If they are still concerned, they may talk to the chair of the board of governors. If after this a parent still has concerns, they can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman.

At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Central Referral Unit

15. Concerns about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff

In **Shimna**, if a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, the member of staff will complete a Note of Concern (see **Appendix 13**) and act promptly. **They will not investigate** - this is a matter for Social Services - but will discuss these concerns with the designated teacher or with the deputy designated teacher if she is not available.

The designated teacher will consult with the Principal or other relevant staff always taking care to avoid due delay. **If the Principal is not available**, advice may be sought from an Education Authority Child Protection Officer. The designated teacher may also seek clarification from the child or young person, their parent/carer.

If a child protection referral is not required, we may consider other options including monitoring, signposting or referring to other support agencies e.g. Family Support Hub with parental consent and, where appropriate, with the child/young person's consent.

If a child protection referral is required, the designated teacher will seek consent from the parent/carer and/or the child {if they are competent to give this} unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm.

Principal/ Designated Teacher makes a referral using the UNOCINI FORM to:

- Social Services Gateway team SE Area:
Gateway.Services@setrust.hscni.net.
- Social Services Gateway team S Area:
duty.service@southerntrust.hscni.net.

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

- EA Child Protection Service – 02895985590
- SET Connects for children in foster care placements – 02882667000
- PSNI Central Referral Unit – cru@psni.police.uk
- Gateway South Eastern area – 03001000300
- Gateway Southern Area - 02837567100

16. Concern about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff or a volunteer

When a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff the Principal (or the designated teacher if the Principal is not available) must be informed immediately. If the complaint is against the Principal, then the designated teacher should be informed and he/she will inform the Chairperson of the board of governors who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority. The procedure, as outlined in DE 2015/13 Managing Allegations Against a Member of Staff will be followed.

17. Consent

Concerns about the safety or welfare of a child/young person, should, where practicable, be discussed with the parent and consent sought for a referral to children's social services in the local HSC Trust, unless seeking agreement is likely to place the child/young person at further risk through delay or undermine any criminal investigative process (for example in circumstances where there are concerns or suspicions that a crime has taken place); or there is concern raised about the parent's actions or reactions. The communication/language needs of the parents/carers should be established for example in relation to disability/ethnicity and the parent's/carer's capacity to understand should be ascertained. These should be addressed through the provision of appropriate communication methods, including, where necessary, translators, signers, intermediaries or advocacy services.

Effective protection for children/young people may, on occasions, require the sharing of information without prior parental/carer consent in advance of that information being shared.

Where staff decide not to seek parental consent before making a referral to children's social services in the local Health and Social Care Trust or the police, the reason for this decision must be clearly noted in the child/young person's records and included within the verbal and written/UNOCINI referral.

When a referral is deemed to be necessary in the interests of the child/young person, and the parents/carers have been consulted and do not consent, the following action should be taken:

- the reason for proceeding without parental consent must be recorded;
- the withholding of permission by the parent/carer must be included in the verbal and written referral to children's social services;
- the parent/carer should be contacted to inform them that, after considering their wishes, a referral has been made.

Staff making a referral may ask for their anonymity to be protected as far as possible because of a genuine threat to self/family. In such instances this anonymity should be protected with an explanation to the staff member that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as information may become the subject of court processes.

18. Age of Consent

The following is the legal position in relation to adults engaging in sexual activity with children and young people:

- A child below the age of 13 years does not, under any circumstances, have the legal capacity to consent to any form of sexual activity.
- The age at which a young person is legally considered competent to give consent to sexual activity is 16 years.
- Sexual activity with a young person under the age of 16 years is illegal.
- The term “sexual activity” includes ALL sexual activity, not just sexual intercourse.
- Sexual activity involving a child between 13 and 16 years of age is illegal, even where ostensibly consenting.
- It is an offence for an adult to have any sexual activity with a young person below 18 years of age, if the adult is in a position of trust with that young person, for example, in a school, youth club or residential setting.
- ALL sexual activity involving a child of 12 years and under is sexual abuse and **MUST BE REPORTED** at the earliest to our designated staff member who will report it to the PSNI or Social Services.
- Information that indicates that a child of 13 – 15 years of age is engaged in sexual activity **MUST** be treated seriously and reported to our designated staff member at the earliest opportunity.
- Although sexual activity by young people aged 16-17 years is not an offence, those under 18 years of age are entitled to protection. Thus, it is important to ensure in such cases that there are no concerns about sexual abuse, exploitation or abuse of trust to be addressed.

19. Safe Recruitment 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 Shimna Integrated College are vetted/supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

20. 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. All members of staff are expected to comply with the school's Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers which has been approved by the Board of Governors. **(See Appendix 1)**

21. Use of Reasonable Force/Restraint

The Department of Education is currently producing new statutory guidance relating to safe handling and the use of reasonable force following a review in 2022 on the use of restraint and seclusion in educational settings in Northern Ireland.

As outlined in The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, Article 4, staff may only use reasonable force/restraint:

- to prevent a student from committing an offence.
- to prevent a student causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the student themselves).
- to prevent a student from engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its students.

Reasonable force/restraint should:

- only be used as a measure of last resort.
- preserve the dignity and respect of all concerned.
- never be used as a form of punishment or to make a child behave; and
- never deliberately cause pain/injury to a student.

All instances of the use of reasonable force/restraint should be recorded, parents/carers should be informed and follow up support provided to the student and staff involved.

Children should never be locked in a room or left unaccompanied and must be able to leave when they want to (**See DE 2021/13**).

22. The Preventative Curriculum

Our personal development curriculum gives specific attention to students' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers a medium to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours. (DE guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools" Circular 2017/04 and subsequent amendments) In SIC as part of our preventative curriculum and in accordance with the Relationships and Sexuality Education N.I (Amendment) Regulations 2023, RSE is "age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate" (*DE Circular 2024/01*) The ETI evaluation report in April 2023 references the Gillen review which highlights the correlation between reducing sexual offences and an effective RSE programme. Our school works hard to promote students' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resiliencies of children so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed during form time and pastoral care lessons. There are also notice boards throughout the school which provide advice, information leaflets on a wide range of issues and contact details for support organisations. Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues include visits/workshops with many organisations including PSNI, Fire Service, Road Safety, Uberheroes, AWARE, MYMY, Women's Aid, YMCA and Cara Friend along with parent programmes.

23. Record Keeping

The college's record systems reflect the guidance in DE Circular 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools. The college keeps detailed records, dated and signed, of all complaints, or information received, and all concerns about possible abuse noted by staff. Members of staff who have received information, or have concerns, about possible abuse should record on the child protection incident record form:

- the nature of the information;
- who gave it;
- the time, date and circumstances;
- where the concern relates to signs or symptoms of possible abuse, a description of these.

The Principal or designated staff member will supplement the record with: details of any advice sought, from whom and when;

- the decision about referral to Social Services;
- if so, how, when and by whom this was done;
- if not, reasons for not making a referral.

All records relating to child protection are accessible only to the Principal and the designated staff members and are stored either:

- in a locked filing cabinet separate from other college records
- electronically in a private folder

In the case of an investigation into a child abuse incident, the records will be accessible on request to the professionals involved in the case.

24. Staff Responsibilities [All members of staff are acquainted with the Staff Code of Conduct *[See Appendix 2]*

In dealing with alleged child abuse, staff **must**:

- take the matter seriously;
- listen respectfully to the person making the allegation;
- use the college procedures for making their factual oral/written reports;
- act in a professional manner at all times;

- provide the necessary support at the time of disclosure;
- act to ensure the protection, safety and welfare of our students;
- report any concerns with a designated staff member.

Staff **must not**:

- investigate allegations;
- promise confidentiality;
- be judgemental or make value judgements;
- Interrogate students or ask leading questions.

Confidentiality 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. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a ‘need to know’ basis.

Where there have been, or are current, child protection concerns about a pupil who transfers to another school we will consider what information should be shared with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school.

If a pupil from our school attends an EOTAS provision, a member of the safeguarding team will share any child protection concerns they have with the DT in the centre. If child protection concerns arise when the pupil is attending an EOTAS provision the designated teacher in EOTAS will follow child protection procedures and will advise a member of the school’s safeguarding team of the concerns and any actions taken. It is the responsibility of EOTAS staff to maintain their records in accordance with DE Circular 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools and any subsequent updates.

Where it is necessary to safeguard children, information will be shared with other statutory agencies in accordance with the requirements of this policy, the school data protection policy and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

In accordance with DE guidance, we must consider and develop clear guidelines for the recording, storage, retention and destruction of both manual and electronic records where they relate to child protection concerns.

In order to meet these requirements all child protection records, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in Shimna Integrated College are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher and

Principal have access to them. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from child's date of birth plus 30 years.

If information is held electronically, whether on a PC, a laptop or on a portable memory device, all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected. A system for electronic recording and monitoring of safeguarding (wellbeing and pastoral) issues is currently being progressed with the new EdIS system.

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/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

25. College Trips

All educational visits, including residential activities, made by students will be organised and undertaken in accordance with the advice issued by the Department of Education and the Education Authority.

In relation to day/field trips and residentials, the staff in charge must ensure the protection and safety of students at all times. It is important that they:

- secure the approval of parent(s)/carer(s) for their child to participate in the event and the associated activities e.g. swimming, canoeing etc;
- provide parent(s)/carer(s) with sufficiently detailed information about the event;
- undertake careful and detailed advance planning including a specific risk assessment using only the approved college documentation;
- ask parent(s)/carer(s) for their child's relevant medical details, food allergies etc;
- ensure that the students are properly supervised at all times;
- deal with observed or reported bullying incidents immediately;
- ensure suitable sleeping and toilet provision if the group includes boys and girls, taking gender identity into account;
- ensure that instructors are properly qualified;
- record details of any accident and report it to the college and the parent(s)/carers;
- follow college procedures in relation to an alleged or suspected child abuse incident;

- adhere to departmental policies in relation to field trips and other such activities.

26. Sporting Activities

It is important that members of the physical education department and other staff involved in sporting activities:

- take all possible measures to ensure the safety and protection of students when engaged in physical contact, outdoor pursuits and swimming activities;
- undertake risk assessments using the approved college documentation;
- take measures to ensure that students do not experience bullying behaviour in the context of sporting activities;
- ensure that students are able to dress as discreetly as possible for sporting activities;
- do not participate in physical contact sports with students;
- ensure that all accidents and injuries to students are recorded and that the parent(s)/carer(s) are informed;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact with students;
- ensure that any sports instructor they use is properly qualified for the task;
- take full account of any advice provided by the Northern Ireland Sports Council in relation to child protection matters.

27. Technology

a. Mobile Phones

Although students may bring mobile phones to college, devices should be switched off and kept out of sight between 9.05am and 3.25pm. The exceptions are at lunchtime or as a learning tool in the classroom when directed by a teacher. The sending of offensive text messages, bullying by text and the taking and sending of inappropriate mobile photographs is a serious offence and may lead to suspension. You can access the College Mobile Device Free Policy at [Mobile Device Free Policy](#)

b. Computers

All members of staff adhere to the college Internet Policy. They monitor carefully the students' use of college computers to ensure that they are not

sending offensive emails or logging on to adult or other inappropriate chat rooms and web sites. The abuse of the use of college computers by students will be treated as a serious offence and may lead to suspension.

c. Cameras

Students may use digital or other cameras for coursework or for social purposes on a residential. They may not use them to take photographs of their peers or others without their permission. If students take such photographs, the camera will be taken from them and retained for collection by a parent/carer. The abuse of the camera in this way will be treated as a serious offence and may lead to suspension.

It is a criminal offence for anyone (including young people under the age of 18) to take indecent pictures of children or young people under 18 years of age. (Sexual Offences Act 2003)

d. Blogs & Websites

See college Internet Policy, which is available from the college website or, on request, from the college office.

28. Working Cooperatively with other Educational Institutions

Now that we have moved into an era of working from time to time in close cooperation with other educational institutions), we need to be clear as to what the position is in relation to child protection matters when members of our staff are working off-site and jointly with staff members from partner schools / colleges. Consequently, the Board of Governors of Shimna Integrated College (SIC) requires members of the college staff engaged in off-site learning experiences in cooperation with other learning institutions, to ensure that:

- they exercise a duty to care for all the students in their care, whether or not they are students of SIC;
- they take all measures necessary, in partnership with staff members from partner institutions, to ensure the safety and well-being of all the students in their care, whether or not they are students of SIC;
- they adhere to SIC's child protection policy and practices, as appropriate;
- they confirm at the outset of any partnership activities that the staff members from the partner institution will be operating according to that institution's child protection policy;

- they undertake a risk assessment for each activity and complete the appropriate notification and risk assessment documentation, as required by SIC;
- all adults from partner institutions working with staff and students from SIC have been properly vetted and are able to take full responsibility for their charges;
- the following recommended and pre-approved teacher/student ratios for off-site activities are applied. If, in some particular circumstance, these ratios cannot be met, this should be noted on the risk assessment form and, in consultation with the Principal of SIC, due consideration should be given as to whether the planned activity should go ahead:

29. Indoor Activities - Staff/student Ratio

8 years+: two adults for up to 20 students + one adult for every additional 10 students, or part thereof.

30. Outdoor Activities

Staff/student Ratio

8-13 years: two adults for groups of up to 15 students + one additional adult per 8 (or part thereof) extra students;
13 years+: two adults for groups of up to 20 students+ one additional adult per extra 10, or part thereof, students.

- the Event Organiser (the SIC staff member with overall responsibility for the activity) and Group Leader/s from partner institutions is/are clearly identified and known to all participants;
- the Event Organiser and Group Leader/s know and undertake their responsibilities in accordance with their respective child protection policies and ensure that members of staff from the partner institution/s are properly qualified to instruct or lead in outdoor activities that carry any level of risk to the participating students;
- the necessary approval for students from SIC to participate in such off-site learning and partnership activities (and any necessary medical details) is procured in advance from the parents/carers of all participating students;

- staff keep parents/carers informed about the content of all such programmes and to inform them about any accidents that involve their child.

Although it is preferable for a teacher from a partnership institution to accompany and be responsible for the care and safety of their own students, the governors recognise that, in some circumstances (e.g. small primary school) this might not always be possible. In such circumstances, and with the prior consent of the Principal of SIC and the partnership institution/s, the governors approve the staff member from SIC acting as group leader, subject to the other requirements being met under this policy. The staff member must, therefore, act in accordance with the requirements of this policy and exercise a duty of care for all students, whether they be from SIC or from a partnership institution.

Where the organising staff member from SIC is unhappy about a child-protection related manner when involved in partnership activities, they should report such concerns to the Principal of SIC immediately.

31. Staff Development

The safeguarding team ensures that all staff members are familiar with this policy document and that they are updated on child protection matters as advised by the Department of Education and the SEEA. Whole school CP training is provided to all staff once every year and the safeguarding team and other members of staff with particular pastoral responsibilities, will attend external training courses relevant to child protection, as appropriate.

32. The Selection and Use of Volunteers

Volunteers are those people who either assume unpaid duties in the college for whatever duration or are engaged by the college to accompany or assist on college visits or trips, summer activity schemes, residentials or to undertake coaching sporting activities. Volunteers will be recruited, selected and AccessNI vetted by the college in accordance with the Department of Education circular.

Formal arrangements for selecting and vetting are not required for volunteers who are in the college outside college hours and who do not have unsupervised contact with students. These include:

- parents/carers and others undertaking self-help projects for the college;

- parents/carers involved in fund-raising activities and using the college premises for meetings;
- parents/carers supervising at college functions where members of the college staff are present (***DE Circular 2012/19 – currently under review***)

33. Persons with Substantial Access to the College Students

The Principal will ensure that the procedures detailed by the Department of Education with regard to the employment of temporary staff or staff employed by private contractors, are followed rigorously (appendix 1).

34. Visitors to the college

Visitors to the college, such as parents/carers, suppliers of goods and services, those who carry out maintenance etc do not routinely need to be vetted before being allowed onto school premises. However, such visitors should be managed by school staff and their access to areas and movement within the school should be restricted as needs require.

Visitors should be:

- Met/directed by school staff/representatives;
- Signed in and out of the school by school staff;
- If appropriate, be given restricted access to only specific areas of the school;
- Where possible, escorted by a member of staff/representative;
- Clearly identified with visitor/contractor passes;
- Access to students restricted to the purpose of their visit;
- If delivering goods or carrying out building/maintenance or repair tasks their work should be cordoned off from students for health and safety reasons.

Child protection Statement for Contractors

Shimna Integrated College is a community of students, staff, parents/carers and governors. The prime purpose of the college is to provide an integrated, excellent education for students in a safe working environment. We welcome all those who come into the college to work, and for the protection of the students, staff and visiting contractors themselves, we would draw to your attention our Child Protection Policy, and ask that you abide by its requirements. **Everyone who works in a school must be police vetted.**

Should you or any member of your staff feel that you wish to raise a concern about your own treatment during your work in the college, or any incident you have observed, please do not hesitate to raise your concern with the Principal, Steve Pagan, the pastoral manager, Danella Goodman, designated teacher Karen Caulfield or deputy designated teachers Suzy Dillon and Stuart Scott.

35. Partnership with Parents/Carers and Links with External Support Agencies

The college has worked hard to create effective partnerships with the parents/carers of its students and it has established good working relationships with a range of external support agencies including the Education Welfare Service, the SEEA's Psychology Service, school counsellor, Social Services, CAMHS and the local PSNI. When incidents of child abuse arise, the child's parents/carers will be informed and involved at the appropriate times and the college will make effective use of the experience and expertise of the appropriate external support agency personnel.

Signs of Safety model – The 'Signs of Safety' approach to child protection casework is a strengths-based, safety-organised approach to child protection, grounded in partnership and collaboration. From January 2020 all five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland use the *Signs of Safety* model in all Initial Child Protection Case Conferences, LAC Reviews and Review Conferences. The college reports which are provided in advance of Initial Child Protection Case Conferences, LAC reviews and Review Conferences use the Signs of Safety model.

MARAC - The college will share information when required to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). A MARAC is a multi-agency meeting where statutory and voluntary agency representatives share information about high risk victims of domestic abuse in order to produce a co-ordinated action plan to increase victim safety. The role of the MARAC is to provide a forum for effective information sharing and partnership working amongst a diverse range of adult and child focussed services in order to enhance the safety of high-risk victims and their children. The main aim of the MARAC is to reduce the risk of serious harm or homicide for victims assessed as being at high risk of domestic violence.

36. Operation Encompass

The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act 2021 established an Operation Encompass model in Northern Ireland. 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.

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 safeguarding school. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide direct or indirect support to this child and family.

This information will be treated like any other child protection information as per DE Circular 2020/07. It 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 the online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency. A new Domestic and Sexual Abuse strategy is being developed jointly by the Department of Justice and Health.

37. Board of Governors

The Board of Governors will delegate a specific member of the governing body to take the lead in safeguarding/child protection issues in order to be able to advise the governors on the following measures:

- the role of the designated teachers;
- the content of the child protection policies;
- the content of a code of conduct for adults within the school;
- the recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff

The following are the child protection measures taken by the Board of Governors:

- at least one governor has completed training provided by CPSS, child protection matters in relation to the appointment of staff will be included on all selection & recruitment panels;
- the designated governor will undertake child protection training provided by CPSS;
- all governors will be encouraged to undertake child protection training;
- all newly appointed staff will be required to provide photographic ID and proof of qualifications;

- a specific child protection question will be included in all recruitment interviews;
- appointees will complete an Access NI check according to the Department of Education procedures prior to taking up their position;
- all substitute teachers will be employed through the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register;
- a letter in relation to student safety will be issued as required by the Department of Education each year to all parents/carers;
- an accessible leaflet relating to child protection will be issued to the parents/carers of all year 8 students in September of each year.

38. Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually by the safeguarding team and approved every 2 years by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, students and staff. It will be implemented through the school's staff induction and training programme and as part of day-to-day practice. Compliance with the policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the designated teacher for child protection and periodically by the Schools Safeguarding Team. The board of governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the designated teacher.

39. Complaints Procedure

Parent/carers wishing to make a formal complaint in relation to how a child protection matter has been dealt with by the college should follow the college complaints procedure which is available on the college website or by requesting a copy from the college office.

The Board of Governors agrees with, and fully supports the contents and implementation of this policy.

Date Policy Reviewed: September 2025

Signed:

Karen Caulfield (Designated Teacher)

Steve Pagan (Principal)

Denise Medea (Chair of Board of Governors)

APPENDIX 1: Code of Conduct for Staff

Objective, Scope and Principles:

This Code of Conduct, which applies to all staff and volunteers, is designed to give guidance on the standards of behaviour which should be observed. School staff and volunteers are role models, in a unique position of influence and trust and their behaviour should set a good example to all the students within our school. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. It is merely for guidance and specific breaches of the Code must not be viewed as a disciplinary offence.

The Code includes sections on:

- Setting an Example
- Relationships and Attitudes
- Private Meetings with Students
- Physical Contact with Students
- Honesty and Integrity
- Conduct Outside of Work
- E-Safety and Internet Use
- Confidentiality

Setting an Example

- 1.1** All staff and volunteers in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by students. Staff and volunteers should therefore, for example, avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times, and demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our students to do the same. All staff and volunteers should be familiar with all school policies and procedures and to comply with these so as to set a good example to students.
- 1.2** Staff and volunteers must always comply with statutory requirements in relation to such issues as discrimination, health and safety and data protection.

2. Relationships and Attitudes

- 2.1** All staff and volunteers should treat students with respect and dignity and not in a manner which demeans or undermines them, their parents or carers, or colleagues. Staff and volunteers should ensure that their

relationships with students are appropriate to the age and maturity of their students. They should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as sarcasm, making jokes at the expense of students, embarrassing, or humiliating students, discriminating against or favouring students. Attitudes, demeanour, and language all require thought to ensure that conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Relationships with students must be professional at all times and sexual relationships with current students are not permitted and may lead to criminal conviction.

2.2 Staff and volunteers may have less formal contact with students outside of school; perhaps through mutual membership of social groups, sporting organisations, or family connections. Staff and volunteers should not assume that the school would be aware of any such relationship and should therefore consider whether the school should be made aware of the connection.

2.3 Staff and volunteers should always behave in a professional manner, which within the context of this Code of Conduct includes such aspects as:

- acting in a fair, courteous and mature manner to students, colleagues and other stakeholders;
- co-operating and liaising with colleagues, as appropriate, to ensure students receive a coherent and comprehensive educational service; having respect for school property;
- taking responsibility for the behaviour and conduct of students in the classroom and sharing such responsibility elsewhere on the premises;
- being familiar with communication channels and school procedures applicable to both students and staff and volunteers;
- respect for the rights and opinions of others.

3. Private Meetings with Students

3.1 It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews with individual students must take place. As far as possible, staff and volunteers should conduct interviews in a room with visual access or with an open door and ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. Where possible, another student or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

4. Physical Contact with Students

- 4.1** To avoid misinterpretations, and so far as is practicable, staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with a student.
- 4.2** Staff and volunteers should therefore be cognisant of the guidance issued by the Department on the use of reasonable force (Circular 1999/09 and guidance document 'Towards a Model Policy in Schools on Use of Reasonable Force).

5. Honesty and Integrity

5.1 All staff and volunteers are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.

5.2 Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school (e.g. a supplier of materials) must be declared to the Principal. A record should be kept of all such gifts received. This requirement does not apply to "one off" token gifts from students or parents e.g. at Christmas or the end of the school year. Staff and volunteers should be mindful that gifts to individual students may be considered inappropriate and could be misinterpreted.

6. Conduct outside of Work

6.1 Staff and volunteers should not engage in conduct outside work which could damage the reputation and standing of the school or the staff/ volunteer's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.

6.2 Staff and volunteers may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary and should ensure it does not affect their work performance in the school. Advice should be sought from the Principal when considering work outside the school.

7. E-Safety and Internet Use

7.1 A staff member or volunteer's off duty hours are their personal concern but all staff and volunteers should exercise caution when using information technology and be fully aware of the risks to themselves and others. For school-based activities, advice is contained in the school's Online Safety Policy.

7.2 Staff and volunteers should exercise particular caution in relation to making online associations/friendships with current students via social media and

using texting/email facilities to communicate with them. It is preferable that any contact with students is made via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment when necessary.

8. Confidentiality

8.1 Staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about students including highly sensitive or private information. It should not be shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the student's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

8.2 There are some circumstances in which a member of staff or volunteer may be expected to share information about a student, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals should pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.

8.3 If a member of staff or volunteer is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to senior leadership immediately.

8.4 Staff and volunteers need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support students, they must not promise confidentiality or request students to do the same under any circumstances. Additionally concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to the Principal or a member of the safeguarding team without delay.

8.5 The school's child protection arrangements include any external candidates studying or sitting examinations in the school.

Dos

- Always treat students with respect
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions
- Keep your relationships professional
- Ensure that adults/children are close by
- Always respect a student's right to personal privacy
- Leave door open/adult can sit in view
- Avoid taking children on their own in your car where possible
- Leave glass on doors clear
- Avoid where possible sharing mobile phone details with children

- Protect your 'online' reputation.
- Know & understand your school policies
- Protect & secure devices
- Set privacy & security settings appropriately
- Keep school email for school business & personal email for private life

Don'ts

- Do not have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with students no matter how well intentioned
- Never take photographs/videos of children without their knowledge and the permission of parents/carers
- Do not store digital photographs or personal data in digital form of students on your own personal property
- Do not accept friend requests from students & it is recommended not to accept from parents
- Do not give personal contact details to students
- Do not make disparaging remarks about your employer, colleagues, students or parents

APPENDIX 2: Definitions and Possible Signs of Abuse

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI 2017)

Physical Abuse is “deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child. ”

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.”

Sexual abuse “occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others.”

Neglect is “the failure to provide for a child’s basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child’s health or development. Children who are neglected, often also suffer from other types of 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. e.g. 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.”

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHILD ABUSE

Since they are in regular and frequent contact with students, school staff are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse or unexplained changes in behaviour or performance, which may indicate abuse.

In all cases where symptoms displayed by a child give rise to concerns about possible abuse, or about the welfare of the child, the teacher or other member of staff should report these concerns to the Designated Teacher. A parent or other carer may also give information to a member of staff of the school which gives rise to concern about possible child abuse by someone outside the school, or by a person working in the school in a volunteer capacity. The member of

staff should advise the person making the complaint that the matter will be brought to the attention of the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher.

It is not possible to give complete lists of symptoms, only indicators of abuse. The following signs do not necessarily point to abuse, as they can be due to other medical or social reasons, but if staff are concerned by any or a combination of these signs, they should pass on their concerns to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher.

A child who is neither being abused nor at risk of abuse may nevertheless be in need of help from Social Services, and such cases need to be made known to Social Services. Social Services welcome indications of concern at an early stage, and often can provide assistance to a family and prevent circumstances from reaching a stage when child protection proceedings become necessary.

Signs of Physical Abuse

- unexplained injuries or burns particularly if they are recurrent
- improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- refusal to discuss injuries
- untreated injuries
- disclosure of punishment which appears excessive
- fear of parents being contacted
- bald patches
- withdrawal from physical contact
- arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- fear of returning home
- fear of medical help
- self-destructive tendencies
- aggression towards others
- chronic running away

Signs of Emotional Abuse

- physical, mental and emotional development delay
- disclosure of punishment which appears excessive
- over-reaction to mistakes
- continual self-deprecation
- sudden speech disorders
- fear of new situations
- inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- neurotic behaviour

- self-mutilation
- fear of parents being contacted
- extremes of passivity or aggression
- drug/solvent abuse
- chronic running away
- compulsive stealing/scavenging

Signs of Neglect

- constant hunger
- poor personal hygiene
- constant tiredness
- poor state of clothing
- emaciation
- frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- untreated medical problems
- destructive tendencies
- low self-esteem
- neurotic behaviour
- no social relationships
- chronic running away
- compulsive stealing or scavenging

Signs of Sexual Abuse

- being chronically depressed/suicidal
- using drugs/drink excessively/self-mutilation
- unexplained pregnancies
- being anorexic/bulimic
- chronic running away
- being inappropriately seductive
- being fearful about certain people like relatives and friends
- not being allowed to go out on dates or have friends around
- soreness, bleeding in the genital or anal areas or in the throat
- excuses not to go home or to a particular place
- recurring nightmares/being afraid of the dark
- being unable to concentrate/playing truant
- a sudden change in school/work habits
- having a friend who has 'a problem'
- chronic ailments such as stomach pains/upsets and headaches
- sexually abusing a child sibling or friend
- being withdrawn, isolated/becoming excessively worried
- outbursts of anger or irritability

- being fearful of undressing for PE
- having unexplained sums of money

APPENDIX 3: THE REPORTING PROCESS FOR CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

Responding to abuse

On suspicion:

- Be available and prepared to listen
- Discuss concerns with member of the safeguarding team
- Don't ignore signs
- Don't keep things to yourself.

On disclosure:

- Remain calm, accessible and receptive.
- Listen carefully.
- Be aware of non-verbal cues.
- Make it clear you take the student's disclosure seriously.
- Reassure them and commend their courage.
- RECORD what they say, using their actual words.
- Tell designated or deputy designated teacher as soon as possible.
- No promise of confidentiality can or should ever be made to a child or anyone else giving information about possible disclosure

On disclosure: DO NOT:

- Promise not to tell anyone else.
- Ask leading questions....ask simply: what happened?
- Express disbelief in what student is telling you..
- Keep it to yourself.
- Do nothing.
- Make comment about the alleged abuser.
- Attempt to investigate.

What to record:

- Facts, in neutral language.
- Nature of information.
- Days, dates and times.
- Evidence and observations.

The DT or DDT will also record:

- Personnel advised and referrals made to.
- Decisions taken and reasons

- A record will be signed and dated by Principal and countersigned by DT or DDT.

The Five Rs

Receive: Listen actively, calmly, open body language, accept, non-judgemental - TED (tell, explain, describe).

Reassure: 'You've done the right thing by coming to me', re-assure child that you have listened and hear what they are saying; don't promise what can't be delivered.

Respond: Tell what you are going to do and do it. Ensure child is ok before leaving.

Report: As soon as possible to a member of the safeguarding team.

Record: Vital – facts, no opinions When? Where? Who? What?

APPENDIX 4: Procedure for staff to report an incident of child abuse in Shimna Integrated College

Child makes a disclosure to a member of staff, or a member of staff has concerns about a child either as a result of one observation or many observations over a period of time. The member of staff does not investigate but **MUST ACT PROMPTLY**



The member of staff refers matter to one of the designated teachers; discusses issue with the designated teacher, and makes full notes.



Designated teacher meets with Principal (in case of Principal's absence – pastoral manager) to plan a course of action and ensures that a written report is made.



Principal/ Designated Teacher makes a referral using the UNOCINI FORM to:

- Social Services and Central Referral Unit



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

- EA Designated Officer
- Social Services

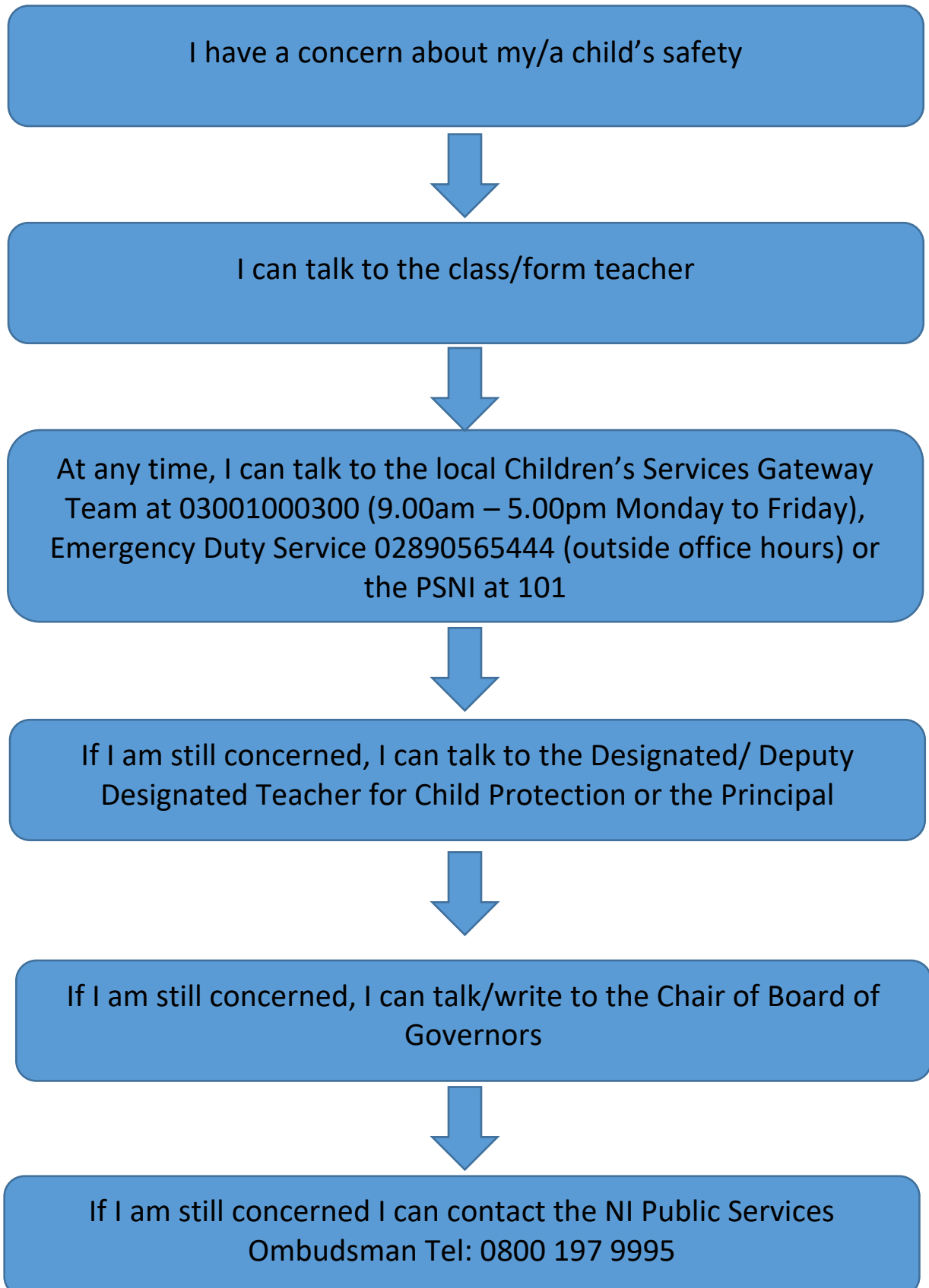


Record Advice given
Monitor and review

If a member of staff requires support following a disclosure from a student, this will be offered by a member of the safeguarding team and where necessary Inspire Workplaces.

APPENDIX 5: How a parent can make a complaint

If a parent has a potential child protection concern:



Appendix 6 – Procedure where the school has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff.

Member of staff completes the Note of Concern on what has been observed or shared and must ACT PROMPTLY.

Source of concern is notified that the school will follow up appropriately on the issues raised.



Staff member discusses concerns with the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher in his/her absence and provides note of concern.



Designated Teacher should consult with the Principal or other relevant staff before deciding upon action to be taken, always taking care to avoid undue delay. If required, advice may be sought from a CPSS officer.

Child Protection referral is required

Designated Teacher seeks consent of the parent/carer and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm then telephones the Children's Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI if a child is at immediate risk. He/she submits a completed UNOCINI referral form within 24 hours.



Designated Teacher clarifies/discusses concern with child/parent/carers and decides if a child protection referral is or is not required.



Child Protection referral is not required

School may consider other options including monitoring the situation within an agreed timescale; signposting or referring the child/parent/carers to appropriate support services such as the Children's Services Gateway Team or local Family Support Hub with parental consent, and child/young person's consent (where appropriate).

Staff member discusses concerns with the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher in his/her absence and provides note of concern.

APPENDIX 7 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff

Key Points

Lead individual learns of an allegation against a member of staff and informs the Chair/Vice Chair of BoG as appropriate and consults DE Circular 2015/13.



Guidance on the Next Steps

Lead individual then establishes the facts, seeks advice from the key agencies as appropriate, usually through informal discussion.

Possible Outcomes

Following on from establishing the facts, seeking advice from Key Agencies and discussion with the Chair and/or BoG to 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 8
CONFIDENTIAL

NOTE OF CONCERN

CHILD PROTECTION RECORD - REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER

Name of Student:
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:



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 student's Child Protection file

Yes No

If 'No' state reason:

Name of staff member making the report: _____

Signature of Staff Member: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Designated Teacher: _____ Date: _____