Seagoe Primary School

Child Protection Policy

Summary

**Updated March 2025**

**Introductory Statement**

The following statements of principle, policy and procedure aim to set the conceptual framework which underpins the practices within Seagoe Primary School. We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, volunteers and governors and are consistent with those of the Safeguarding Board for N. Ireland (SBNI).

This policy reflects the desire of those involved in the care and education of children at Seagoe Primary School to provide a secure and safe environment and is based on the following principles of Child Protection:

* The child’s welfare is paramount;
* The voice of the child 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.

Seagoe Primary School recognises that, in addition to pupils’ learning, the school has a pastoral care and responsibility towards its pupils who have the right to be protected from harm. Consequently, we can be expected to do whatever is reasonable to safeguard and promote the welfare and safety of all pupils.

**Context**

The issues of Child Protection are a sensitive area for children. Our school seeks to support the child’s personal development in ways which will foster understanding, security, confidence and independence. This will include the concept of healthy relationships between children and adults.

**Other Relevant 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 including:

* Positive Behaviour Policy
* Anti-Bullying Policy
* Use of Reasonable Force Policy
* Special Educational Needs Policy
* Administration of Medicines Policy
* Health and Safety Policy
* Staff Code of Conduct
* E-Safety Policy
* Managing a Critical Incident
* RSE

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing to have a copy should contact the School office or visit the school website at [www.seagoeps.co.uk](http://www.seagoeps.co.uk).

**Aims**

* To demonstrate the school’s commitment with regard to child protection to pupils, parents and other partners.
* To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their child protection responsibilities.
* To regularly review and update policies and procedures with regard to new legislation and advice
* To ensure consistent good practice.

Safeguarding Team

Principal Mrs C. Poots

Designated Teacher Mrs J. Curlett

Deputy Designated Teacher Miss J. Connolly

Deputy Designated Teacher Nursery Mrs N. Maginn

Board of Governors Chairman Rev. T. Cadden

Designated Governor Mr A. Woods

**The role of the Designated Teacher involves:**

* The induction and training of all school staff including support staff;
* Being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff;
* Responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns;
* Maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services;
* Making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where necessary;
* Liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection;
* Keeping the school Principal informed;
* Lead responsibility for the development of the school’s Child Protection Policy;
* Promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school; and
* Compiling written reports to the BoG regarding Child Protection.

The role of the Deputy Designated Teacher is to work co-operatively with the DT and to undertake the duties of the DT when required.

**Operation Encompass**

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

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

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

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

Seagoe Primary School recognises their five main responsibilities in the areas of Child Protection. These are in the areas of prevention, recognition, response, referral and confidentiality/record keeping.

**Prevention**

Seagoe Primary School provides a ‘child protection ethos’ and a preventative curriculum.

Our school seeks to promote pupils’ awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resilience so that children can develop coping strategies and can make positive choices in a range of situations. The curriculum includes a program for children on personal protection. Examples include Love for Life workshop, NSPCC programs and lessons carried out by the Temperance Society.

**Recognition**

Staff are aware of the different categories of abuse and the physical and behavioural indicators.

**Response Procedures – when a disclosure is made**

* **Receive**
* Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
* Accept what is being said
* Take notes at the time if possible.
* **Reassure**
* Reassure the child, but only as far is honest and reliable.
* Do not promise confidentiality - we are duty bound to refer
* Attempt to alleviate guilt
* **React**
* Do not interrogate the child or ask leading questions.
* Ask open questions
* Explain the next step in the procedure and who else needs to be informed.
* **Record**
* Make notes at the time, if possible or immediately after the disclosure is made.
* Record: date, time, place, exact words used by the child, any noticeable injuries

 or bruises, sign and date.

* **Refer**
* To the Designated Teacher
* The Designated Teacher will inform the Principal, EA Designated Officer and

 Outside agencies.

**Referral**

I f 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 must act promptly.**

**He/she should not investigate** – this is a matter for Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher, discuss the matter with her and make detailed notes.

The Designated Teacher will discuss this matter with other relevant staff as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is made.

The Safeguarding Team will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. **If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the Designated Teacher is obliged to make a Referral.** If a Child Protection Referral is required, the Designated Teacher will seek consent from the parent/carer unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm.

The Designated Teacher may seek clarification or advice and consult with the EA Officer, or the Senior Social Worker before a Referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. **The safety of the child is our first priority.**

**Allegations against a Member of Staff**

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply unless the complaint is about the Designated Teacher or Principal.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

**Allegations against the Principal**

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Designated Teacher (or Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The Designated Teacher will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

**Confidentiality and Record Keeping**

Staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality the sharing of information with school staff

All records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a secure cabinet, which is only accessible to the Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teachers and the Principal. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from child’s date of birth plus thirty years.

**Transmission of Information**

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. Advice will be sought from Social Services and the EANI Safeguarding Officers.

**Code of Conduct**

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interests of the child as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the child in their charge must be above reproach. All members of staff are expected to comply with the school’s Code of Conduct which has been approved by the Board of Governors.

In all cases, teachers should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of pupils, particular care should be taken in respect of attitudes, demeanour and language which should reflect the ethos of the school, and which cannot be misconstrued as causing emotional abuse.

**Board of Governors**

Members of the Board of Governors are fully trained in the area of Child Protection. Governors are kept informed of staff training, all Child Protection incidents which occur and any Policy changes.

**Vetting all Staff and Volunteers**

Members of the Board of Governors will have responsibility for ensuring Child Protection Procedures are followed in the school. They will attend Child Protection Training and Recruitment Training. All members of staff, teaching and non -teaching; paid and voluntary are vetted/supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and departmental guidance.

**Staff In-Service Training**

The school is committed to in-service training for all staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on Policy and Procedures.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Policy and Procedures will be updated in the light of any further guidance and legislation. On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

**How a Parent can make a complaint**

**Procedure for Parents who wish to raise a Child Protection Concern**

I have a concern about my/a child’s safety.

I can talk to the Class Teacher.

If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Principal **Mrs Poots**, Designated Teacher for Child Protection **Mrs Curlett**, Deputy Designated Teacher **Miss Connolly** or Nursery Designated Teacher **Mrs Maginn.**

If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors **Rev. T. Cadden**

At any time, a parent can talk to the local Children’s Services Gateway Team at 028 37 567100 or the PSNI Central Referral Unit at 101

If a parent has a concern about a child’s safety or suspect child abuse within the local community, it should be brought to the attention of the Children’s Services Gateway

**Processes for Referral are set out in the Flowchart below:**

**Processes for Referral are set out in the Flowchart below:**

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 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 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).

**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.

Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed as to the action taken. The Designated Teacher will maintain a written record of all decisions and actions taken and ensure that this record is appropriately and securely stored.

**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.

**Guidance on the Next Steps**

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

Alternatives to precautionary suspension imposed.

Precautionary suspension under Child Protection procedures imposed.

Allegation addressed through relevant disciplinary procedures.

**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.

A Lead Individual to manage the handling of an allegation should be identified from the outset, normally the Principal or a designated senior member of staff.

A full version of the Child Protection Policy is available on request.