

**(Title Page)**

## **1. CHILD PROTECTION ETHOS**

We in Denamona Primary School have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe 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. All staff, teaching and non-teaching should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. We as a school do not work in isolation. Child protection is the responsibility of all adults and especially those working with children. We work consistently and appropriately with child protection agencies. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school

## **2. PRINCIPLES**

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, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Pastoral Care in Schools- Child Protection"(DENI Circular 99/10) and the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures(2005).

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy.

- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- In any incident the child's welfare must be paramount, this overrides all other considerations.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first.

## **3. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES**

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Special Educational Needs
- Educational Visits
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Sex Education
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- Use of Video Cameras & Photographs
- ICT and access to the internet
- Intimate Care

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing a copy should contact the School Principal or visit the school website at [www.school-sites.org/denamonaps](http://www.school-sites.org/denamonaps)

#### **4. SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

The following are members of the schools Safeguarding team

- Chair of the Board of Governors –Rev. J Marsburg
- Designated Governor for Child Protection -Mr B Beattie
- Principal/Designated Teacher -Mrs. G Beattie
- Deputy Designated Teacher –Mrs. C Anderson

### **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **5.1 The Chair Of The Board Of Governors**

The Chair of the Board of Governors must:

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment
- Ensure that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy;
- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment & selection training provided by the WELB Child Protection Support Service for Schools, the WELB Governor Support and Human Resource departments.
- Ensure that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive termly updates and a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity

#### **5.2 The Designated Governor For Child Protection**

The Designated Governor will provide the child protection lead in order to advise the 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
- Recruitment, selection and vetting of staff

### **5.3 The Board of Governors**

Board of Governors must ensure:

- that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy;
- Relevant Child Protection training is kept up-to-date by at least one governor and a record kept of the same;
- that confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to an entire Board of Governors on a need-to-know basis.

### **5.4 The Principal**

The Principal must ensure that:-

- DENI 1999 / 10 is implemented within the school
- That a designated teacher and deputy are appointed
- That all staff receive child protection training
- That all concerns about possible abuse are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- That complaints or allegations against school staff are appropriately managed
- That the Chairman of the Board of Governors (and the Board of Governors) is kept informed
- That the WELB Designated Officer for Child Protection and/or CCMS are consulted and kept informed as appropriate
- That a record of Child Abuse Complaints is maintained and made available at least annually to the Board of Governors.
- That the school's child protection records are securely stored and permanently preserved.
- That child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors meetings (termly updates & annual report)
- That the school child protection policy is reviewed annually and that parents and pupils receive a copy of this policy at least once every 2 years.
- That confidentiality is paramount, information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.

### **5.5 The Designated Teacher (And Deputy)**

The designated teacher and deputy must

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role
- Organise child protection training for all teaching and non-teaching staff (whole school training) to be delivered a minimum of once every two years
- Lead in the development of the school's Child Protection Policy
- Act as a point of contact for staff (and parents)
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents

- Make referrals to Social Services (Gateway team) or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate
- Liaise with the Western Education & Library Board designated officers for Child Protection
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- Keep the School Principal informed
- Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection

## **5.6 The Class Teacher**

Teachers see children over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and hear allegations of abuse.

The teacher must:

- listen to what is being said and support the child
- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child (appendix 5a)
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed through the written "Record of Concern" pro-forma (appendix 5b) or verbally about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying, concerns about home conditions
- Avail of whole school training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children
- act promptly

## **5.7 The Parents**

Parents should play their part in Child Protection by:

- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's situation;
- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the child after school:
- providing the school with written evidence i.e. a Court Order to support any request to the Principal for changes to arrangements for contact with their child;
- Informing the school of any changes of address, contact details or living arrangements for their child e.g. child going to live with a relative;
- familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Internet and Child Protection Policies;

- reporting to the office when they visit the school
- raising any concerns they have in relation to their child with the school.

## **6. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

### **6.1 Definition of Abuse**

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child.

### **6.2 Types of Abuse**

**Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

**Physical Abuse** is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of the other person. It may involve causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

**Sexual Abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

## **6.3 Child Protection in Other Specific Circumstances**

### **Bullying**

Bullying is not defined as a category of abuse within the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005). The policy does however state that the damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children and at the extreme cause them significant harm (including self harm). The procedure for referral and investigation of abuse may therefore be implemented in certain circumstances such as:

- Anti-bullying procedures have failed to be effective
- Bullying is persistent and severe, resulting in the victim suffering/likely to suffer significant harm
- There are concerns that the bullying behaviour is indicative of the bully suffering/likely to suffer significant harm
- Where concerns exist in relation to the parents/carer's capacity to meet the needs of the child (either victim or bully).

In accordance with the procedure the needs of the victim and the bully will be considered separately taking into account the family situation and the wider community.

The school has a detailed anti-bullying policy which can be obtained from the school or can be downloaded from the school web-site.

### **Children Who Sexually Abuse Others or Display Sexually Harmful Behaviour**

When abuse of a child is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the procedures outlined in section 7.2 of this policy will be followed. It is important in such situations to distinguish between behaviours which are experimental in nature and those that are exploitative and harmful. Advice and support will be sought in such circumstances from a WELB Designated Officer for Child Protection and where appropriate a referral made to the statutory agencies. In all such cases a risk assessment will be undertaken and a risk management plan identified. Appropriate services will also be provided for the children involved.

## **6.4 Signs and symptoms of abuse (these are outlined in Appendix 1)**

## **7. PROCEDURES FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO CHILD ABUSE**

### **7.1 How a Parent can make a Complaint**

At Denamona Primary School we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern they can talk to the class teacher or the Principal/Designated teacher for child protection. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time a parent may talk to a social worker in the local

Gateway team or to the PSNI Public Protection Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in Appendix 2.

## **7.2 Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff**

Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a child they should not investigate – this is a matter for the Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with her and make full notes. These notes or records should be factual, objective nature and include what was seen, said, heard or reported, the place and time of who was present and should be given to the designated teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The designated teacher will decide whether in the best interest of the child the matter needs to be referred to the Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately.

The designated teacher may need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information or from others who may have relevant information. The designated teacher may also consult with the Western Education & Library Board's designated officer for child protection or Social Services (Gateway Team) 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 prime priority.

If there are concerns that the child or young person may be at risk, the designated teacher is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the designated teacher will telephone the Western Health & Social Services Gateway Team. She will also notify the Western Education & Library Board's designated officer for child protection. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be completed and forwarded to the Gateway team with a copy sent to the WELB designated officer for child protection.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in Appendix 3.

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.



Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay calm</li> <li>• Listen</li> <li>• Accept</li> <li>• Reassure</li> <li>• Explain what you are going to do</li> <li>• Record accurately</li> <li>• Seek support for yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Promise to keep secrets</li> <li>• Ask leading questions</li> <li>• Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily</li> <li>• Delay</li> <li>• Start to investigate</li> <li>• Do Nothing</li> <li>• Don't remove any clothing</li> </ul>

### **7.3 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff**

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal/Designated teacher (or the deputy designated teacher if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal/Designated teacher)

If a complaint is made against the Principal/Designated teacher the Chairperson of The Board of Governors will be informed and he/she will ensure that necessary action is taken.

Where the matter is referred to the Social Services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The Chairman of the Board of Governors will also be informed immediately.

The investigation and management of such a complaint will take place in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education and the relevant agencies involved. In the exercise of its duties towards pupils and staff appropriate levels of support will be provided to both the child and the staff member concerned. This may involve the provision of external support services.

### **7.4 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a volunteer**

Any complaint about the conduct of a person working in the school in a voluntary capacity should be treated in the same manner as complaints against a person who is not on the school's staff, and the above procedures followed. If the Principal has any concern that a child may be at risk, the services of the volunteer should be terminated immediately.

## **8. ATTENDANCE AT CHILD PROTECTION CASE CONFERENCES AND CORE GROUP MEETINGS**

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated teacher or Principal may be invited to attend an initial and review child protection Case Conferences or core group meeting convened by the Western Health & Social Care Trust and where possible a school representative will be in attendance. A written report will be provided for these meetings and will be compiled after discussion with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored in line with what has been agreed in each child's protection plan;

## **9. 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 and where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, a legal duty to report this. However, only those who need to know will be told.

## **10. RECORD KEEPING**

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person.

If a complaint about possible child abuse is received by the school and is not referred to Social Services – or if it is referred and Social Services do not place the child's name on the Child Protection Register – a record on the child's file will be permanently preserved and a confidential copy will be sent to any school to which the child subsequently transfers.

If the Social Services inform the school that child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, a record of this fact and associated documentation from the Social Services will be maintained on the child's file while he or she continues to attend our school.

When the child's name is removed from the child protection register then all Social Services records will be destroyed and only the school records retained for permanent preservation. Should a child transfer to another school whilst their name is on the child protection register then we will inform the receiving school that his/her name is on the register and the name of the child's social worker. All Social Services records held by us in relation to the child will then be destroyed. The school's own child protection records in relation to the child will be held in secure and confidential storage for permanent preservation. Please refer to recording pro-forma used to record concerns.

## **11. VETTING PROCEDURES**

All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in the School are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

## **12. 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. The school has a code of conduct for staff which is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. The schools code of conduct is included as Appendix 6 and is taken directly from the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Pastoral Care in Schools- Child Protection" (DENI Circular 99/10).

## **13. STAFF TRAINING**

Denamona Primary School is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on Policy and procedures with some members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and annual refresher training. The Principal/Designated Teacher; Deputy Designated teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend relevant child protection training courses.

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school Child Protection Policy and code of conduct and given a copy of the policy which includes what to do if you are worried that a child is being abused.

## **14. THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM**

In the classroom, regular Circle Time sessions are used as a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self confidence, respect and sensitivity among classmates.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through class assemblies and there is **a permanent child protection notice board in the main corridor and relevant information in each resource area**, which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers. A flow diagram of how a parent may make a complaint is also on display. An enlarged flow diagram for a teacher allegation is in staff room.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues:

- The NSPCC regularly visits the school and provides information on a range of child protection issues through Assemblies, talks, role-plays, puppet shows and resources
- Primary 1 to Primary 7 children participate in a community awareness programme run by the PSNI, the “CASE” programme
- Primary 5 pupils take part in the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service talks on Fire Safety.
- Each year Primary 7 pupils participate in the “Bee Safe” Activity Day which is run jointly by health Promotion Agency and the Western health and Social Services Trust and involves all the emergency services.
- Internet safety provided by the PSNI
- Cross Community programme
- Personal Safety/Keep Safe activities delivered at various Key Stages within the NI Curriculum under PDMU.

#### **14. EXTENDED SCHOOL PROGRAMME**

The School provides/funds the following extended schools activities and this policy also applies to the pupils and staff engaged in these activities.

Swimming	Football
Rugby	Parenting
Card making	Computer class

#### **15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Denamona Primary School will update this Policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the child protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the designated teacher.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

## Appendix 1

### Signs and Symptoms of abuse – possible indicators

#### Physical Abuse

<b><u>Physical Indicators</u></b>	<b><u>Behavioural Indicators</u></b>
Unexplained bruises – in various stages of healing – grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations; or abrasions; untreated injuries; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday	Self destructive tendencies; aggressive to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; improbable excuses to explain injuries; chronic runaway; uncomfortable with physical contact; come to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home; clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories

#### Neglect

<b><u>Physical Indicators</u></b>	<b><u>Behavioural Indicators</u></b>
Looks very thin, poorly and sad; constant hunger; lack of energy; untreated medical problems; special needs of child not being met; constant tiredness; inappropriate dress; poor hygiene; repeatedly unwashed; smelly; Repeated accidents, especially burns.	Tired or listless (falls asleep in class); steals food; compulsive eating; begging from class friends; withdrawn; lacks concentration; misses school medicals; reports that no carer is at home; low self-esteem; persistent non-attendance at school; Exposure to violence including unsuitable videos.

#### Emotional Abuse

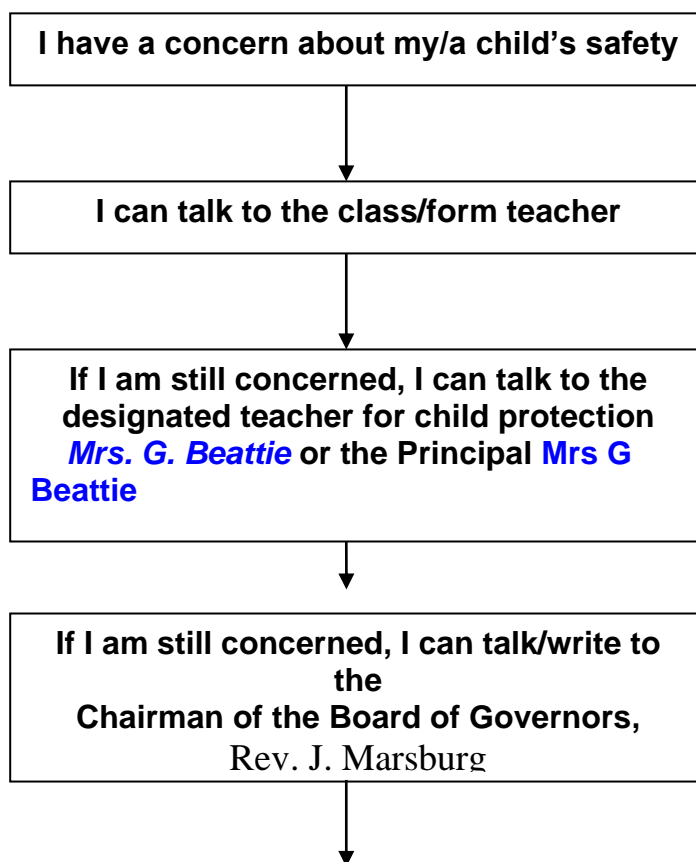
<b><u>Physical Indicators</u></b>	<b><u>Behavioural Indicators</u></b>
<b>Well below average in height and weight; “failing to thrive”;</b> poor hair and skin; alopecia; swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet; recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; sudden speech disorders; signs of self mutilation; signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness); Extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).	Apathy and dejection; inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations; rocking/head banging; inability to play; indifference to separation from family indiscriminate attachment; reluctance for parental liaison; fear of new situation; chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour; Poor peer relationships.

## Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<b>Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs;</b> bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas; torn, stained or bloody underclothes; chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches; difficulty in walking or sitting; frequent urinary infections; avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers; Unexplained pregnancies where the identify of the father is vague; anorexia/gross over-eating.	What the child tells you; Withdrawn; chronic depression; excessive sexual precociousness; seductiveness; children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal; over concerned for siblings; poor self esteem; self devaluation; lack of confidence; peer problems; lack of involvement; massive weight change; suicide attempts (especially adolescents); hysterical/angry outbursts; lack of emotional control; sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour; inappropriate sex play; repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories; vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; Exposure to pornographic material.

## Appendix 2

### How a Parent can make a Complaint

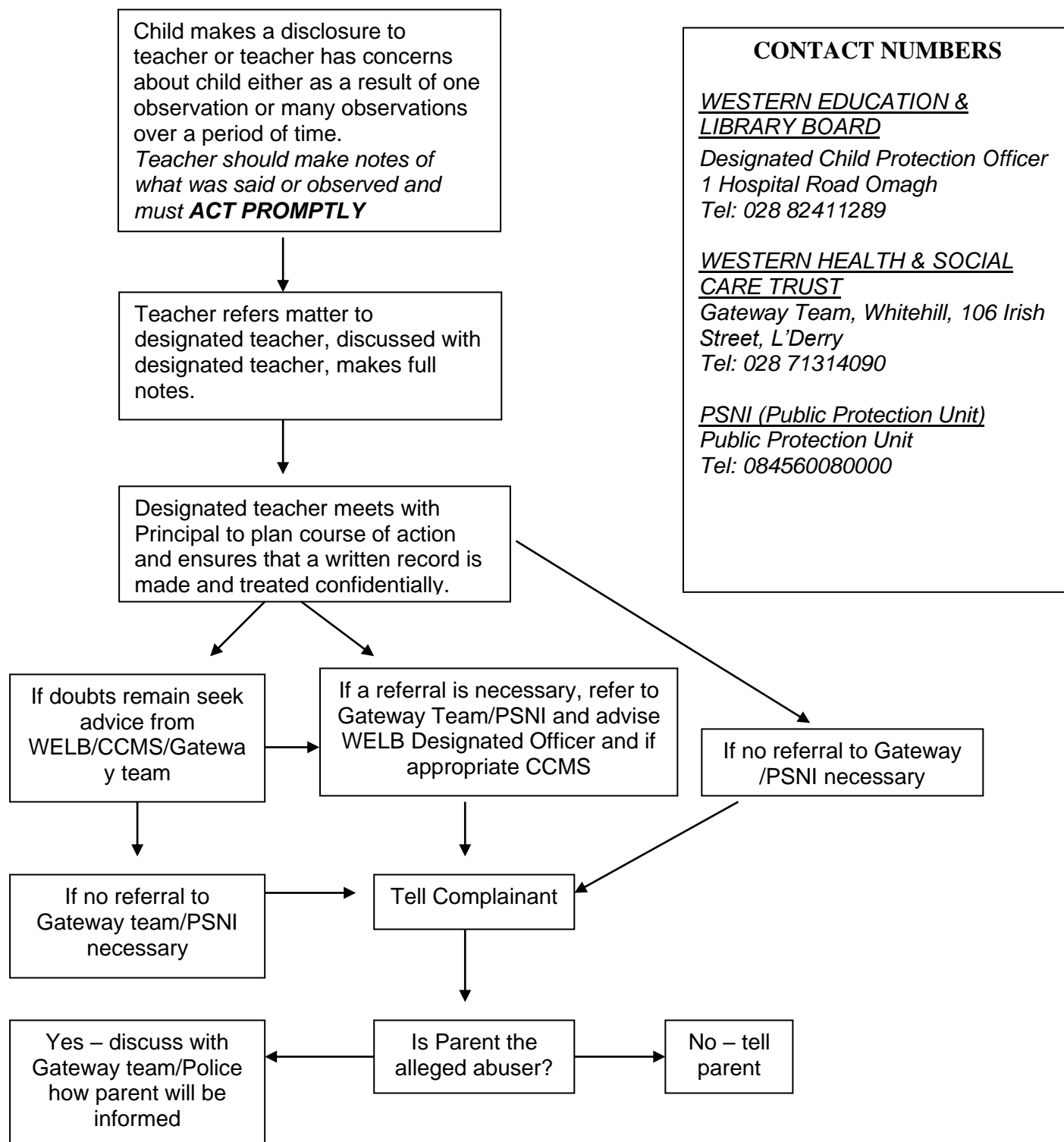


***At any time a parent can talk to:***

***A social worker at the Gateway Team (Western Trust)  
Tel: 028 71314 090  
or the  
PSNI at the Public Protection Unit  
Tel: 0845 600 80000***

## Appendix 3

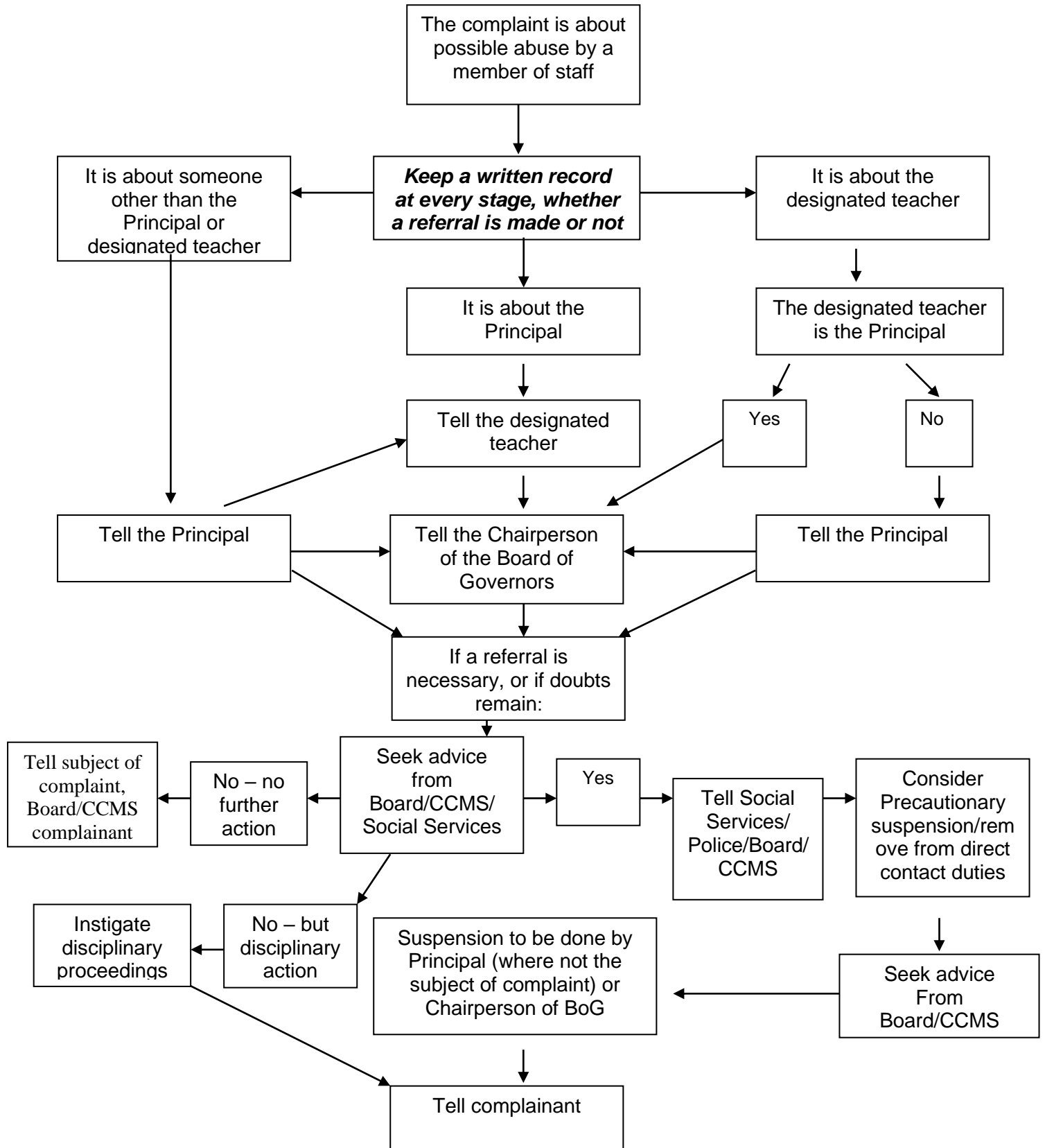
### Procedure where the School has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff





## Appendix 4

### Procedure where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff.



Appendix 5

**DENAMONA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**CHILD PROTECTION PROFILE OF CONCERNS (FORM A)**

Child's Initial\_\_\_\_\_ DOB\_\_\_\_\_ Year Group\_\_\_\_\_

Date	Details of Concern	Signature

5 (b)

DENAMONA PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT REPORT - FORM B

Child's Initial\_\_\_\_\_ DOB\_\_\_\_\_ Class\_\_\_\_\_

Details of Incident

Person completing the report \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to school \_\_\_\_\_  
Address (if person making the report is not known)

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

5 (c)

**DENAMONA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**CHILD PROTECTION UPDATE RECORD - (FORM C)**

**Child's Name**\_\_\_\_\_ **DOB**\_\_\_\_\_ **Year Group**\_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Guardians\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance in current school year\_\_\_\_\_days out of possible\_\_\_\_\_days.

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**ATTAINMENT LEVELS / EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

INTELLECTUAL ABILITY(eg below average/average/above average)

PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO INTELLECTUAL ABILITY

PRESENTATION OF WORK, INCLUDING HOMEWORK

PARTICIPATION IN TEACHING / LEARNING ACTIVITIES

## Appendix 6

### CODE OF CONDUCT

#### **Private Meetings with Pupils**

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

#### **Physical Contact with Pupils**

- As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Staff who have to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*
- Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to his/her line manager.
- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of schools activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

### **Choice and Use of Teaching Materials**

- Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. Schools have already received advice on the value of consulting parents and Governors when proposing to use materials such as the AIDS education for schools and in connection with sex education programmes.
- If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the principal before using it.

### **Relationships and Attitudes**

Within the Pastoral Care Policies of the school and the employing authority, staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

### **Conclusion**

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

From time to time it will be prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young children, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of children/young people or of their parents/guardians.