

Child Protection Policy

2014/15



"Striving Together for Achievement"

*** The next annual review of this document will take new *Safeguarding Bill (Northern Ireland) Bill 2009* recommendations on board***

These child protection policy and procedure materials were drawn up specifically for Gaelscoil na Móna / Naíscoil na Móna (Hereafter referred to as Gaelscoil na Móna or the School) and conform to current child protection legislation and guidance.

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1. Policy Statement

Gaelscoil na Móna along with associated clubs and facilities acknowledges it has a responsibility for the safety and physical and emotional well-being of children in our care. It also recognises that good child protection policies and procedures are of benefit to everyone involved with the School's work, including staff.

Gaelscoil na Móna is committed to practices which protect children from harm. For the purpose of this policy, Gaelscoil na Móna staff includes not only its full-time and part-time employees but the also trainees, volunteers and students on Teaching Practice or Work Experience. All Staff who have unsupervised access to or contact with children are required to :

- recognise and accept their responsibilities;
- develop awareness of the issues which can cause children harm; and
- report concerns following the procedures below.

Gaelscoil na Móna will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- a) adopting child protection procedures and a code of practice for all who work on behalf of the School;
- b) reporting concerns to the authorities;
- c) following carefully procedures for recruitment and selection of staff, trainees and volunteers; and
- d) providing effective management for staff, trainees and volunteers through support and training.

Gaelscoil na Móna is also committed to reviewing its Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct at regular intervals.

It is Gaelscoil na Móna's policy that:

1. All staff working on behalf of the School accept responsibility for the welfare of children who come into contact with the School in connection with its tasks and functions, and that they will report any concerns about a child or somebody else's behaviour, using the procedures laid down.
2. There are designated child protection person(s) within the School who will take action following any expression of concern and the lines of responsibility in respect of child protection are clear.
3. Designated child protection person(s) know how to make appropriate referrals to child protection agencies.
4. All those who are involved with children on behalf of the School should adhere to the Code of Practice in relation to children.
5. Information relating to any allegation or disclosure will be clearly recorded as soon as possible, and there is a procedure setting out who should for record information and the time-scales for passing it on.
6. The Children (NI) Order 1995 states that the 'welfare of the child is paramount'. This means that considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations should not be allowed to over-ride the right of children to be protected from harm. However, every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned when an allegation has been made and is being investigated.
7. The School's policy on duty of care to children will be referred to or included in recruitment, training, moderation and policy materials where appropriate, and the policies are openly and widely available to staff and actively promoted within the organisation.
8. A culture of mutual respect between children and those who represent the School in all its activities will be encouraged, with adults modelling good practice in this context.
9. All staff, trainees, volunteers and anyone in paid or unpaid work on behalf of the School with unsupervised access to children will be vetted appropriately.
10. It is part of the School's acceptance of its responsibility of duty of care towards children that anybody who encounters child protection concerns in the context of their work on behalf of the School will be supported when they report their concerns in good faith.

2. Code of Conduct

Gaelscoil na Móna expects that all staff, which for these purposes, includes anybody in paid or unpaid work on its behalf will be aware of this Code of Conduct and adhere to its principles in their approach to all children.

1. The vision of Gaelscoil na Móna is that all children should be educated in a safe, nurturing environment that promotes their welfare and protects them from significant harm.
2. All contact with children should be as open as possible, and it is important that no more time should be spent alone with children than is necessary.
3. It is important to avoid physical contact with children other than deemed necessary to ensure their safety.
4. It is not permitted to take children alone in a car on journeys, however short.
5. Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.
6. It is important not to deter children from making a 'disclosure' of abuse through fear of not being believed, and to listen to what they have to say. Guidance on handling a disclosure is set out in Section 8. If this gives rise to a child protection concern it is important to follow the School's procedure for reporting such concerns, and not to attempt to investigate the concern yourself.
7. Remember that those who abuse children can be of any age (even other children), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.
8. Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals, and the adult modeling of appropriate conduct - which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism, sexism or disability discrimination.
9. When taking action in any child protection investigation, consideration will be given to the human rights of the child and the family. Sometimes it may be necessary to infringe such rights, for both the parent and child, e.g. the right to a private and family life. When a child or family's rights are infringed, the reasons must be clearly recorded in the child's case files / records.

3. Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher responsible for Child Protection (DT)

Gaelscoil na Móna has appointed a designated child protection person who is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children. **Gerard Larkin** is the Designated Teacher responsible for Child Protection contactable in School or by phone 90-611588 or in person in school. The Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection, **Gráinne Mullan** is also contactable by the above methods. **Annette Small** is the Designated Officer in Naíscoil na Móna 90-619773

The role of the designated person(s) is to:

1. know which outside child protection agency to contact in the event of a child protection concern coming to the notice of the School;
2. provide information and advice on child protection within the School;
3. ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover;
4. liaise with local social services and other agencies, as appropriate;
5. attend Case Conferences as needed;
6. keep relevant people within the School informed about any action taken and any further action required; for example, disciplinary action against a member of staff;
7. ensure that a proper record is kept of any referral and action taken, and that this is kept safely and in confidence;
8. advise the Board of Governors of child protection training needs; and

Liaise with the Belfast Education and Library Board child protection Officers; the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Belfast Social Care Trust and NIPPA to review the operation of the Child Protection Policy regularly to ensure the procedures are working and that they comply with current best practice.

4. Procedure for Reporting Concerns

Concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing can be aroused in a number of ways; most likely one of the following

1. staff concerns
2. the conduct of a member of the School's staff;
3. a child "disclosing" abuse;
4. potential signs of neglect;
5. bruising or evidence of physical hurt; which may or may not be accompanied by;
6. unusual behaviour by a child.
7. concerns of parent of the child(ren) in question.
8. concerns of another parent in the school
9. concerns of members of the public

Concerns about a specific child should be reported immediately **in person or by telephone** to the DT/DDT and confirmed by DT/DDT in writing **within 24 hours** using the reporting forms available from the school office.

Delay could prejudice the welfare of a child.

If the concerns relate to the conduct of a member of staff these should be reported in person/by telephone to the DT/DDT immediately or, *in their absence*, to any member of staff who will inform the Designated Teachers in school using the above protocol.

The DT/DDT will consider the report and may seek appropriate advice which might include discussing the circumstances on a confidential basis with the BELB / NSPCC / Health and Social Services.

The DT/DDT may refer to the authorities (Gateway Social Services or PSNI);

Or

The DT/DDT may decide not to refer the concerns to the authorities but initiate a full record of the concerns of that child and to liaise with the parent/caregiver as appropriate

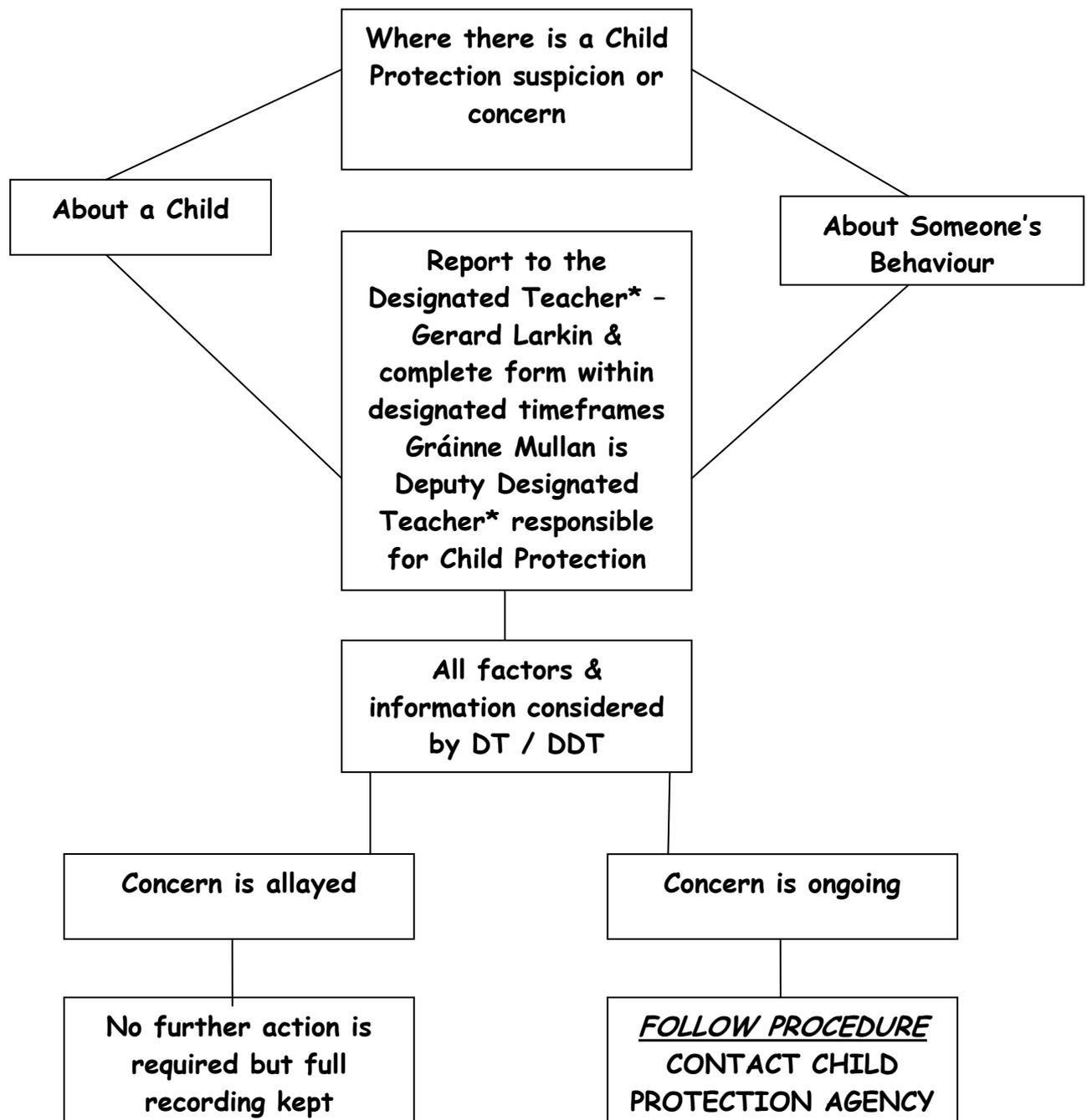
If a member of staff has such concerns about something they have seen, or are concerned about, *outside school hours* it should be reported to a DT/DDT (Gerard/Gráinne) in person/by phone by 9am the next working day and followed up by a written incident form within 24 hours. In cases of emergency, either PSNI Child Protection Team or Social Services Gateway Team may be contacted for advice. (Contact details are contained at back of this policy)

This policy applies equally to ALL staff members. In the case of a non-teaching staff member having a concern, they should inform their line manager that they *have a safeguarding concern* and need to speak to the DT/DDT immediately. If it is in the child's interest, the issue may be discussed with the class teacher first/afterwards but the DT/DDT must be informed; the above protocol must be adhered to. Remember:

Delay could prejudice the welfare of a child.

5. Process Flowchart for Reporting Concerns

This flowchart demonstrates the process by which child protection concerns will be addressed by the School.



*In the absence of the Designated Teacher and the Deputy Designated Teacher, Report to the Principal Caireann Uí Mhuireagáin.

6. Definitions

The child Protection procedures apply to all children and young people under 18 years of age including children upon their birth. 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 a residential, hospital or institutional setting or in a 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 here are intended to safeguard children in our School who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards the child.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child or the willful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behavior. It may be the result of a deliberate act, but could also be caused through the omission or failure to act to protect.

Emotional Abuse

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 making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. It may involve actual physical contact. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, and by other young people. It also includes non-contact activities such as involving children in watching or taking part in the making of pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or failing to ensure that a child gets appropriate medical care or treatment.

NB Domestic violence, whether witnessed, heard or being the victim of, may constitute one, or all, of the above categories of abuse.

7. Recruitment and Selection Procedures

Appropriate recruitment and selection procedures for staff in the context of child protection have been adopted by the School and include the following.

1. A clear definition of any role so that the most suitable appointee can be identified.
2. Identification of key selection criteria.
3. A wide circulation of vacancies to ensure equal opportunities.
4. Confirmation of the identity of the applicant including personal details will be obtained through using an application form, Photographic I.D, registration on GTCNI for Teachers, fully enhanced vetting, uptake of references will always include most recent employer and reason for vacating post.
5. Requirement of a declaration of previous convictions and submission to formal check, together with the issue of the Child Protection Policy for those candidates whose work will bring them into contact with children or who will have a management responsibility in relation to those whose work does bring them into such contact.
6. A clear guarantee that disclosed information will be treated in confidence and not used against applicants unfairly, including adherence to the Criminal Records Bureau code of practice.
7. Documentary evidence of qualifications.
8. Photographic I.D. required at interview stage.
9. Use of several selection techniques to maximise the chance of safe recruitment, e.g. interview, references, checks.
10. At least one representative from the Board of Governors who has responsibility for Child Protection will be fully involved in the Recruitment & Selection Process, and will explore the candidate's attitudes towards and suitability to working with children.
11. Written references will contain a Child Protection question.
12. Job offer will be subject successful vetting and references being free from any Child Protection concern.
13. Job offer will be subject to registration with the General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland.
14. All members of the Board of Governors will be vetted.
15. The Chair, and Designated Governor for Child Protection, will receive Child Protection Training.

8. Responding Appropriately to a Child Making an Allegation of Abuse

1. Stay calm.
2. Listen carefully to what is said.
3. Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
4. Tell the child that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.
5. Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace.
6. Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
7. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
8. Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared.
9. Record in writing what was said, using the child's own words as soon as possible – note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.
10. It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies, following a referral from the designated child protection person in the organisation.

9. Allegations against a member of staff

Procedures to be followed

A complaint or allegation may be made, in the context of child protection, about the conduct or activities of a member of staff of the school towards a child or children. If the complaint has not been made directly to the Principal and he/she is not the subject of the complaint, it should be referred directly to him / her by the person to whom it was made.

To form a clearer view on the complaint, the Principal 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.

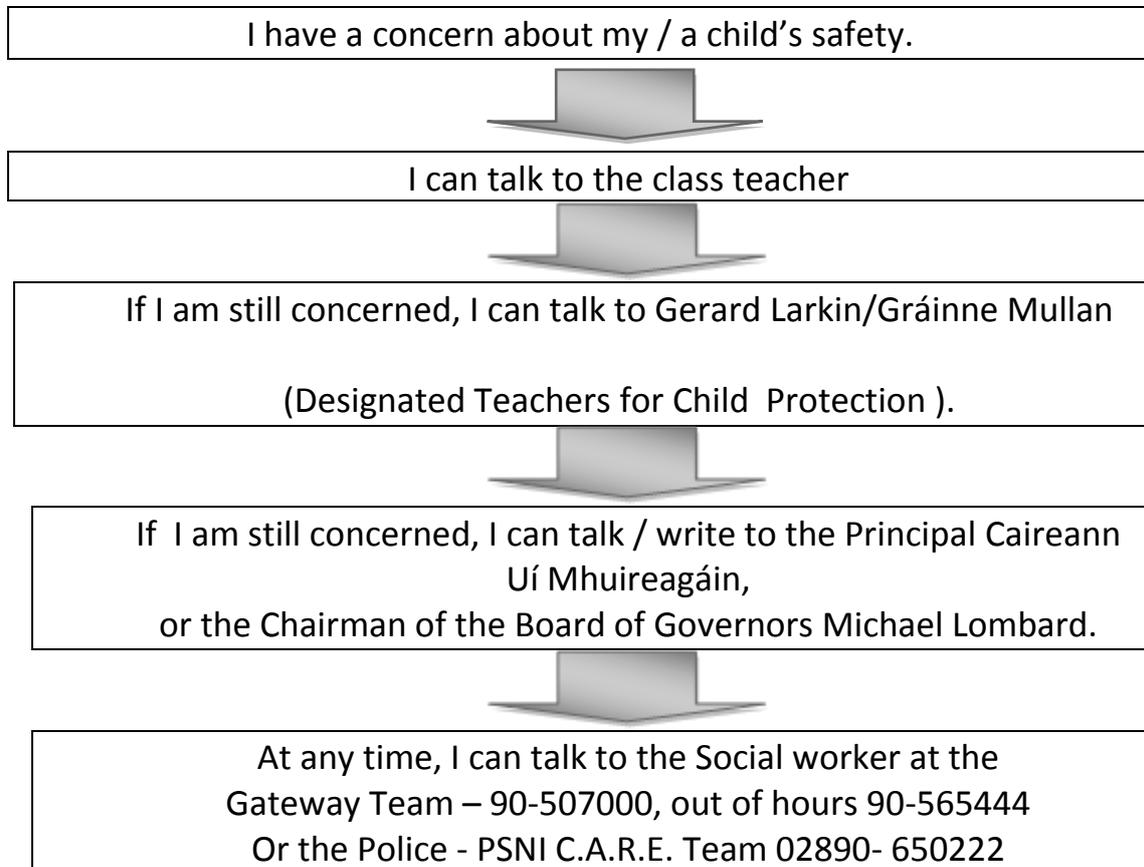
It is not, however, the responsibility of the school to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers.

The school should not take action beyond that set out in the procedures established by their Education and Library Board and ACPC to be followed in handling cases of suspected abuse.

Having satisfied him / herself that a complaint has indeed been made, the Principal should immediately

- inform the designated teacher (if he / she is not the subject of the complaint) who will initiate the record of the complaint;
- consult, as a matter of urgency and in confidence, with the designated officer of the Education and Library Board, to form an initial assessment as to whether or not there is sufficient substance in the allegation to warrant further action; and
- consult the Chairperson of the Board of Governors

How a parent can make a complaint about Staff Behaviour.



10. Useful Telephone Numbers

Gaelscoil na Móna – 02890-611588

Naíscoil na Móna – 02890-619773

BELB, Academy St. – 02890-564000

BELB, Academy St. Designated Child Protection Officers 02890-564393

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta – 02890-321475

Gateway Team - Belfast Health & Care Trust, – 90-507000, out of hours 90-565444

Belfast Health & Care Trust, Cupar Street – 90-327156

NSPCC, Belfast – 90-351135

Childline – 0800 1111

NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000

PSNI C.A.R.E. Team 02890- 650222 – police exchange & ask for the Child Abuse Investigation Unit