

## **Child Protection Policy**

We in Gilford Primary School have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge and we will carry out this duty through our pastoral care policy, which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. One way in which we seek to protect our pupils is by helping them learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks. Our policy reflects the department's guidance relating to substitute teachers (circular 2008/10). All substitute teachers are booked on-line via NISTR. Parent helpers are vetted in line with circular 06/09; as are staff employed to carry out extended schools activities. School governors are also vetted in accordance with circular 06/25. In relation to interviewing and selection panels, Gilford Primary follow the requirements as set out in circular 06/08.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school, teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. This ethos is reflected in all actions and decisions taken by staff as they follow the detailed guidance set out in the SELB Child Protection Procedures, DENI circulars 1999/10, 1999/06/07/08/09, Children's (N. Ireland) Order 1995, guidance and the Regional Child Protection Committee Policy and Procedures. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child and the welfare of each child is our paramount consideration in Gilford Primary School. The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

## **General Principles**

The principles which underpin our work with children are those set out in the 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UK Agreement 1991) and enshrined in the Children's Order 1995. In particular at Gilford Primary the principle we support is that every child has the fundamental right to be safe from harm and with proper care given to their physical, emotional and spiritual well being by those looking after them.

The following principles form the basis for effective child protection activity and underpins the guidance which we follow.

- The child or young person's welfare must always be paramount, this over-rides all other considerations. Where a child or young person is disabled or has special needs, these must be taken into consideration.
- 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 or young person's interests must always come first.
- Children have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may affect their lives. Where a child or young person has a disability, specialist assistance should be sought to achieve this.
- Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters which affect their family.
- Actions taken to protect the child or young person (including investigation) should not in themselves be abusive by causing the child or young person unnecessary distress or further harm.
- Intervention should not deal with the child or young person in isolation, the child or young person's needs should be considered in the context of the family. Agencies' actions must be considered and informed so that they are sensitive to and take account of the child or young person's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race and any special needs.
- Where it is necessary to protect the child or young person from further abuse, alternatives which do not involve moving the child or young person and which minimises disruption of the family should be explored.

## **What is child abuse?**

We use the following definitions for Child Abuse.

### **Neglect**

The persistent or significant neglect of a child or young person, or the failure to protect a child or young person from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child or young person's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

### **Physical**

Physical injury to a child or young person whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly prevented.

### **Sexual**

The sexual exploitation of a child for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification, the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles.

### **Emotional**

Persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child or young person.

### **Bullying**

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in Gilford Primary School. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both victims and bully will be personally contacted immediately bullying behaviour is identified. This is in line with Gilford Primary School Anti- Bullying Policy.

## Procedures for Reporting Suspected (Or Disclosed) Child Abuse

The designated teachers for child protection are Mrs Trew and Mrs Armstrong. If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or another 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 the Social Services, but they should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with her and make full notes (see Appendix 1). Mrs Trew and Mrs Armstrong will plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is made. It will be decided whether, in the best interest of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school will make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately.

The Principal (Mrs Armstrong) may seek clarification or advice and consult with the SELB's Designated 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 appropriate advice. The safety of the child is the first priority.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse, the Principal will inform:

- Social Services
- SELB's Designated Officer for Child Protection (this will be done in an envelope marked 'Confidential - Child Protection')

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, Mrs Armstrong (Principal) (or the designated teacher, if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the designated teacher). Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the designated teacher must be informed immediately. Miss Herdman will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure action is taken.

If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do if he/she has concerns about a child, or unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the designated teacher.

It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. In the interest of the child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told.

### **Record Keeping**

The Principal will ensure the proper records, dated and signed are kept of all complaints or information received and all concerns about possible abuse noted by staff. As soon as possible Mrs Armstrong should obtain a written record (Appendix 1) from the member of staff who received the information, or otherwise has concerns about possible abuse, setting out:

- 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.

Miss Herdman or Mrs Paul will supplement where possible, the record with:

- details of any advice sought, from whom and when;
- the decision reached as to whether the case should be referred to Social Services and, if so;
- how, when and by whom this was done
- otherwise, reasons for not referring to Social Services.

### **Confidentiality and Record Keeping**

For reasons of confidentiality the only people who need to know are:

Miss Herdman (Designated Teacher for Child Protection)

Mrs Paul (Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection)

If others need to know they will be included at the Principal's and Designated Teacher's discretion.

All records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal's office. The only people with keys to this cabinet are Miss Herdman (Designated Teacher for Child Protection) and Mrs Paul (Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection)

These records only identify the child by their initials and date of birth. These records are kept separate from any other file which is held on the child. (Appendix 2)

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the educational establishment's disciplinary procedures, a summary is entered on a Record of Abuse Complaints. This entry which will contain details of the complaint, will be made available to the Board of Governors.

### **Code of Conduct for Staff**

Criminal record checks on teaching and non-teaching staff at Gilford Primary School will be conducted according to guidance issued in DENI Circulars 1990/28 and 1999/10 and subsequent SELB guidance.

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interests of the children 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 children in their charge must be above reproach.

This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children gain from positive interaction within Gilford Primary School. It 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.

### **Code of Conduct/Intimate Care**

#### **1. Private meeting with pupils**

- (a) 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.

- (b) Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.
- (c) Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

## 2. **Physical Contact with Pupils**

- (a) As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- (b) It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that 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.
- (c) 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. (DENI Circular 1999/9) on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education Northern Ireland Order 1998 (Power of member of staff to restrain pupils). See school policy on use of Reasonable Force to Restrain/Control Pupils.
- (d) Physical punishment is illegal as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- (e) 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.
- (f) Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.

- (g) 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 the designated teacher for child protection
- (h) Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school 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.
- (b) Although all care will be taken to develop independence eg when toileting or changing clothes in Foundation Stage, if a situation develops, where a child is unable to carry out the above, a member of staff will assist, if it is the parent's wish that this should happen (see appendix 3). Parents will be asked to sign a consent form at the beginning of the year. Every effort will be made to afford the child maximum privacy while ensuring the safety of the staff. Where possible, two adults will be present and a written record of this made. If a child becomes distressed and does not want to be changed his/ her wishes will be respected and every effort will be made to contact the parents.

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

- (b) Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- (b) If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

## **Conclusion**

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

In all circumstances professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of staff this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If members of staff have any doubts about how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult the Principal or a representative of their professional association.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to re-appraise their teaching styles, relationships with children and their manner and approach to individual children, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions in the minds of colleagues, of children or of their parents/guardians.

## **Staff Training**

Gilford Primary School is committed to in-service training for all staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on Policy and Procedures with other members of staff receiving more specialist training in line with their roles and responsibilities. The child protection Designated Teacher Miss Herdman and Deputy Designated Teacher Mrs Paul will be trained in child protection and training will be refreshed every three years.

- Two governors will also be trained in Child protection
- Teaching and non-teaching staff will be trained in Child Protection every two years by the designated teacher for Child Protection.
- The Child Protection policy and procedures will be monitored and evaluated and updated each year

### **Visitors in School**

All visitors in school should ring the front door and then be let in by Mrs Graham or another member of staff. The visitor will be greeted in hallway and asked to sign into the visitor's book. They should state:

1. Name
2. Time arrived
3. Reason for visit
4. Time at which they left the school building

The visitor will also be asked to put on a visitor's badge while on the school grounds.

### **People working in School**

We often have people working on the premises throughout the year repairing faults in toilets etc. These people will follow the same entry process as visitors in school but will be asked to work in the school building during break or lunchtime if possible. A member of staff will over see them working within toilets etc at these times. At all times staff will, to the best of their ability try to ensure that people working in school will not be left unsupervised while working in school and children will not be sent to areas where people are at work.

### **Parents in School**

- We discourage parents from coming into the school building at all times. However, if they need to collect a child or leave something into school for a child they must report to the secretary's office. Parents will not be allowed to wander around the school.
- Parents may come into the school grounds to leave children into their class lines at the beginning of the day or to collect them at home - time.
- If a child is to be collected by someone different parents must let the school know in advance.
- Children will walk to the front gate with their teacher at home time and teachers will check children are collected by the appropriate person. Primary 1 children are collected outside their classroom door by their parents. Any child who has no-one to collect them will be reassured, brought into school and the family or minder will be contacted.

## **Gates**

When appropriate our bottom gate will be open until approximately 9.30 to allow children to use it to come into school but will be locked from 9.30 for the rest of the day.

## **Photographic Images of Children**

### **Photographs within school**

As school is seen as a public place parents will be asked in a letter for consent to have their child's photograph displayed in school. Children will be only named by first name in school. (See Appendix 1)

### **Photographs for Publicity eg newspaper, school brochure etc**

Consent from parents will also be sought so that children's photographs from this school can be used for publicity purpose. First names only will be used. (See Appendix 1)

### **Parents taking photographs and videos in school eg Christmas performance**

There will be occasions during the school year where parents will wish to take photographs or make a video recording of their child or children taking part in a school activity.

At Gilford Primary School we need to take practical steps to ensure that pictures and images taken of children are done so in a way that reflects the protective ethos of the school. In order to do so we as a school need to ensure that parental use of photography and video is monitored and protected for the benefit of children and their parents.

At Gilford Primary School we ask parents to read and sign a copy of our Child Protection Policy.

### **Residential Trips/Day Trips**

We follow the policy, practice and procedures produced by SELB Circular No 2007/53.

### **Photographs on the Web Site**

We ask for written consent from parents to let their child's photograph be put on our School web site. (Appendix 1)

### **Mobile Phones**

Pupils are not allowed mobile phones in school. Any phone found will be held by the teacher and returned at the end of the day.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Gilford Primary School will update this Policy and Procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually. Participation and consultation with children and parents will be undertaken.

A monitoring instrument has been developed which will ensure that the agreed Policy and Procedures have been implemented. On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.



### **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 make contact with 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.

Further information see [The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022.](#)

## Child Protection – Gilford Primary School Procedures

All staff have a statutory responsibility to protect children. In the event of concern or disclosure the following procedure should be followed:

1. Disclosure/other concerns or suspicions

2. Jot down notes: dates, time, facts, observation, verbatim speech if possible

Please note: it is not the role of the school to investigate

3. Contact designated teacher - Miss Herdman  
Deputy designated teacher - Mrs Paul

If not available contact deputy designated teacher Mrs Armstrong

4. Establish pupil's name, address DOB  
Name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

5. Miss Herdman/ Mrs Paul must contact the designated Officer (SELB)  
SELB Chief Education Welfare Officer  
Tel No 0283751200

6. Contact Social Services. Discuss, await advice. Tel No 02838831983. Arrange for Social Worker to talk to child if necessary (time, Place)

7. Inform others as necessary - Chairman of Board of Governors.

8. Prepare confidential file and write up report and UNOCINI Report to Social Services

## Contacts and Help lines

### Help lines:

NSPCC

Jennymount Court

North Derby Street

BELFAST

BT15 3HN

Tel: (028) 90351135

NI Childline

PO Box 1111

BELFAST

BT1 7DZ

Tel (028) 90327773

### **Other Useful Contacts**

Child Care (NI)

216 Belmont Road

BELFAST

BT4 2AT

Tel: (028) 90652713

Kidscape

2 Grosvenor Gardens

LONDON

SW1W 0DH

Tel:017107303300

Youthnet

The Warehouse

7 James Street South

BELFAST

BT2 8DN

Tel: (028) 90331880

Children's Law Centre

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Philip House

124-137 York Street

BELFAST

BT15 1AB

Tel: (028) 90245704

Advice Line 90434242

Save the Children

Popper House

15 Richmond Park

BELFAST

BT10 OHB

Tel: (028) 90431123

Fax: (028) 90431314

Craigavon & Banbridge

Community Health & Social

Services Trust

Bannvale House

Gilford

BT63 5JX

Tel: (028) 38831983

## REFERENCES

1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Kingdom Agreement 1991)
2. Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 - An Introductory Guide for Schools 1996.
3. DENI Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection 1999/10 Circular and Guidance
4. Southern Area Child Protection Procedures
5. Wallace Report July 1998
6. Educational Trips - A Good Practice Guide
7. Integrating Child Protection into the Curriculum CCEA
8. Evaluating Pastoral Care - Guidance 1999 ETI
9. Co-operating to Protect Children - DHSS
10. Our Duty to Care (Children Northern Ireland)
11. Getting it Right (NIVDA)