

# Portadown College



## Child Protection Policy 2010

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The following statements of principle, policy and procedure aim to set the conceptual framework which underpins the practices within Portadown College. 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 Circular 1999/10. Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 Guidance and the Southern Area Child Protection Committee Procedures.

### **1.1 General Principles**

The principles and philosophy which underpin our work with children are those set out in the 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UK Agreement in 1991) and enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (effective from November 1996). In particular the principle we support is that every child or young person 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 underpin 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 a 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 well informed so that they are sensitive to, and take account, of the child or young person's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture, race, and any special needs.

## 2. CONTEXT

Portadown College is a Controlled Co-educational Grammar School (Senior High School) catering for day students in the 14-19 age range from Portadown and a wide surrounding area. It operates within the jurisdiction of the Southern Education and Library Board. The students transfer mainly from three Junior High Schools at 14+, Clounagh Junior High School, Killicomaine Junior High School, Portadown and Tandragee Junior High School. Students also transfer at 16+ to the Sixth Form of Portadown College to study GCE 'A' Levels. Students enrolling at Portadown College therefore come from a full range of backgrounds.

The ethos of the College is central to the establishment and maintenance of good behaviour and demonstrates good relationships between teachers themselves and between teachers and students. As with general discipline, we should seek to emphasise and reward positive behaviour rather than apply sanctions. The ethos, as promoted by all involved with students, is a fundamental objective to the success of the College.

## 3. PROCEDURES

Portadown College recognises its five main responsibilities in the areas of Child Protection. These are prevention, recognition, response, referral and confidentiality/record keeping. Parents will be made aware of our responsibilities and procedures and we hope they will support us in our practice.

### 3.1 Prevention

We offer a supportive environment to children and young people who **are** being abused, **have been** abused and **may** be abused in the future. All children and young people are vulnerable.

Our College has developed a 'child protection ethos' and is developing a preventative curriculum. We offer children an alternative model to violent or abusive behaviour and alternative methods of responding. We aim to involve the whole College community in creating a 'listening College'.

The educational establishment offers protection on two levels:

- Immediate protection - creating a listening environment that makes it easier for children and young people to share their concerns.
- Long term protection, enhancing self-esteem and encouraging social skills, breaking the cycle of abusive behaviour.

The Board of Governors ensures that the curriculum includes a programme for children and young people on personal protection. Sex education forms part of several subjects and the PD programme.

The Board of Governors ensures that the College has and follows the Code of Conduct drawn up for all members of staff, towards the children and young people attending the school. The Code of Conduct covers all activities organised in and by the College.

We ensure that persons outside the College who are invited to be involved as helpers/leaders on educational visits, residential visits, or other out of school educational activities are subject to vetting procedures in keeping with current arrangements for the care and protection of children and young people.

We will ensure that we will provide adequate training for staff.

### **3.2 Recognition**

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 not prevented.

**Sexual** - the sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification; the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities or 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 is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our College. 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 victim and bully will be personally contacted immediately bullying behaviour is identified.

### **3.3 Response**

In the event of an allegation of child abuse the member of staff will:

- Listen to the child or young person and accept what is said
- Record statements
- Explain what they have to do next and to whom they have to talk
- Reassure the child or young person they have done the right thing to talk about it
- Refer information to the designated member of staff

### **3.4 Referral: Co-operating to Support and Protect Children**

#### **Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse.**

The designated member of staff for child protection is Mrs P Greer. In her absence Mr D Atkinson will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

If a child or young person 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 or young person, **the member of staff must act promptly.**

**He/she should not investigate** - this is a matter for the Social Services - but should report these concerns immediately to the designated member of staff, discuss the matter with him/her and make full notes.

The designated member of staff will discuss the matter with the Headteacher as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record is made.

The Headteacher, in consultation with the designated member of staff, will decide whether, in the best interests of the child or young person, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. **If there are concerns that the child or young person may be at risk, the Headteacher is obliged to make a referral.** Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Headteacher may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Designated Officer from the Education Board 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 or young person is our first priority.

### **3.4.1 Allegations against a Member of Staff**

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Headteacher (or the designated member of staff, if he is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply unless the complaint is about the designated member of staff or Headteacher. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

### **3.4.2 Allegations against the Headteacher**

If a complaint is made against the Headteacher, the designated member of staff (or her deputy, if she is not available) must be informed immediately. He/she will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

### **3.4.3 Allegations against the designated member of staff**

Any complaints must be referred to the Headteacher.

### **3.4.4 Suspension from duties**

Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with students, and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services.

## **3.5 CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING**

### **3.5.1. For reasons for confidentiality the only people who need to know are:**

Headteacher	Mr S Harper
Designated Teacher	Mrs P Greer
Deputy Designated Teacher ( <i>Vice Principal</i> )	Mr D Atkinson
Pastoral Year Head	Optional
Form Teacher	Optional
Senior Social Worker	( <i>depends on area</i> )
Designated Officer (SELB)	Mrs McCann (028 38341975)

### **3.5.2 Record Keeping**

All records, information and confidential notes are kept secure in a locked drawer. These only identify the child or young person by their initials and date of birth. These records are kept separate from any other file which is held on the child or young person.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as formal referral or under the College'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.

## **4. CODE OF CONDUCT**

Staff are aware of and adhere to the Code of Conduct which has been drawn up and agreed through Teachers' Negotiating Machinery and the SELB.

## **5. STAFF IN-SERVICE**

The College 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.

## **6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The College 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.