



## Portadown College Child Protection Policy 2022

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The following statements of principle, policy and procedure aim to set the conceptual framework which underpins the practices within Portadown College. 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 Education Authority (Southern Region).

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.

This ethos is reflected in all actions and decisions taken by staff as they follow the detailed guidance set out in the Education Authority Child Protection Procedures, DENI Circular 2017/04 (Revised 2019), Safeguarding and Child Protection in School Guide (June 2022), 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 young people 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 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 College recognises that safeguarding encompasses more than child protection.

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

- The young person's welfare must always be paramount; this over-rides all other considerations. Where a young person is disabled or has special needs these must be taken into consideration.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting young people and respecting the rights and needs of Parents/Carers and families; but where there is a conflict, the young person's interests must always come first.
- Young people 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 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.
- Parents/Carers are supported to exercise parental responsibilities and families helped to stay together.
- High risk bullying behaviour (including Cyberbullying) can be considered as a form of child abuse and if deemed necessary the safeguarding procedures within the school's Child Protection Policy will be implemented.
- Actions taken to protect the young person (including investigation) should not in themselves be abusive by causing the young person unnecessary distress or further harm.
- Partnership – safeguarding is a shared responsibility and the most effective way of ensuring that a young person's needs are met is through working in partnership. Intervention should not deal with the young person in isolation; the 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 young person's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture, race, and any special needs.
- **Prevention** - The importance of preventing problems occurring or worsening through the *Personal Development curriculum* and the introduction of timely supportive measures.
- **Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances** - Where a young person's needs can be met through the provision of support services, these should be provided. Both organisations and individual practitioners must respond proportionately to the needs of a young person in accordance with their duties and the powers available to them.
- **Protection** – Young people should be safe from harm and in circumstances where a parent or carer is not meeting their needs, they should be protected by the competent authority.
- **Evidence-based and informed decision making** - Decisions and actions taken must be considered, well informed and based on outcomes that are sensitive to, and take account of, the young person's specific circumstances, risks to which they are exposed, and their assessed needs.

The College Child Protection Policy should be read in conjunction with the other relevant policies and procedures:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- College Code of Conduct Policy
- Child Protection Code of Conduct for Staff Policy
- Drugs Policy
- Educational Visits Form
- Online (E) Safety Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy

## 1.2 The Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team works to ensure effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the College.

The College based Safeguarding Team includes the Principal (as Chair and Deputy Designated Teacher), the Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher. The Wider Safeguarding Team includes the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Designated Governor for Child Protection. The Team may co-opt other members as required to help address specific issues, for example the Learning Support Co-ordinator, ICT Co-ordinator etc.

The responsibilities of the team include:

- The monitoring and periodic review of Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements in the College;
- Support for the Designated Teacher in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities, including recognition of the administrative and emotional demands of the post;
- Ensuring attendance of Governors, staff and volunteers at relevant training, including refresher training – in keeping with legislative and best practice requirements.

## 2. 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/carers will be made aware of our responsibilities and procedures and we hope they will support us in our practice.

### 2.1 Prevention

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

Our College promotes a 'child protection ethos' and delivers a preventative curriculum through personal development lessons, bespoke workshops and events. We offer students an alternative model to violent or abusive behaviour and alternative methods of responding. All strands of the Personal Development (PD) curriculum seek to promote resilience and informed decision making in our students.

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 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 young people on personal protection. Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) forms part of several subjects and the PD programme.

The PD curriculum has an on line safety lessons for each year group to educate students on the risks of accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe online. The College engages with parent/carers to share information, advice and guidance on the appropriate and safe use of digital technology.

The Board of Governors ensures that the College has and follows the Code of Conduct drawn up for all members of staff, towards the 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 young people.

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

## 2.2 Recognition

We use the following definitions for Child Abuse:

**Neglect** - the persistent or significant neglect of a young person, or the failure to protect a 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 young person's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

**Physical** - physical injury to a young person, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

**Sexual** - the sexual exploitation of a young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification; the involvement of young people in sexual activities or any kind (including via e-technology e.g. 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 young person.

**Exploitation** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature (Child Sexual Exploitation – see below).

**Grooming** of a young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the young person's loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case.

Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) (see below), but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse.

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** - is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them.

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

FGM is a complex issue with many men and women from practising communities considering it to be normal to protect their cultural identity. The procedure may be carried out when the girl is newborn, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during the first pregnancy.

**Forced Marriage** - is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Forced Marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland, and where an agency, organisation or practitioner has knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person, they should contact the PSNI immediately.

**Harmful Sexualised Behaviour** is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when:

- There is no informed consent by the victim; and/or
- The perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim.

**Domestic abuse** is defined as threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

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 student being targeted and to discipline the bully. Parents/carers of both the student being targeted and bully will be personally contacted immediately bullying behaviour is identified. Students are given guidance on how to deal with cyber bullying through PD lessons.

We recognise that child abuse can occur in various contexts and the abuser may be a stranger or someone known to the young person.

## **Operation Encompass**

The College is 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 (ACE) 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 students 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 College Safeguarding Team. This will allow the College 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 the College will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

For further information see The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.

### **2.3 Online safety**

Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, social environments and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device.

The College Online Safety Policy contains details on:

- Procedures to reduce the risk of students accessing harmful, inappropriate or illegal contents in school
- The On line safety curriculum which highlights the importance of young people acting responsibly and keeping themselves safe when using all forms of on line communication.

### **2.4 Sexting**

Sexting is the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the Internet. There are two aspects to Sexting:

- Sexting between individuals in a relationship
- Sharing an inappropriate image with an intent to cause distress

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (Source: Sexting in Schools and Colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding Young People – UKCCIS, September 2016) refers to sexting among young people as '*youth produced sexual imagery*' to ensure there is clarity in dealing with this issue.

'Youth produced sexual imagery' best describes the practice because:

- ‘Youth produced’ includes young people sharing images that they, or another young person, have created of themselves.
- ‘Sexual’ is clearer than ‘indecent.’ A judgement of whether something is ‘decent’ is both a value judgement and dependent on context.
- ‘Imagery’ covers both still photos and moving videos

The types of incidents which can be regarded as youth produced sexual imagery are:

- A person under the age of 18 creates and shares sexual imagery of themselves with a peer under the age of 18
- A person under the age of 18 shares sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18 or an adult
- A person under the age of 18 is in possession of sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18

#### College response to incidents involving ‘youth produced sexual imagery’:

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) has made clear that incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery should primarily be treated as safeguarding issues. The College will therefore seek advice from the Child Protection Service for Schools on assessing the risks to the student(s) involved and if these can be managed within the College’s pastoral support and Code of Conduct and if appropriate, the local network of support agencies.

Parents (or carers) will be informed and involved in the process at an early stage unless informing the parent/carer will put the young person at risk of harm. Any decision not to inform the parents/carers would generally be made in conjunction with other services such as the CPSS, Social Services and/or the PSNI, who would take the lead in deciding when the parents/carers should be informed. See Appendix 5 for flow diagram of the College response to incidents of ‘youth produced sexual imagery’.

The following does not come within the classification of ‘youth produced sexual imagery’:

- The sharing of sexual imagery of people under 18 by adults as this constitutes child sexual abuse and the PSNI will always be informed.
- Young people under the age of 18 sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which don’t contain imagery.

## **2.5 Response**

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

- Listen to the young person and accept what is said
- Record statements (Appendix 4)
- Explain what they have to do next and to whom they have to talk
- Reassure the young person they have done the right thing to talk about it but never give the young person undertakings of confidentiality
- Refer information to the designated member of staff (Appendix 4)

## **2.6 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 the Pastoral Vice-Principal. In his/her absence one of the deputy designated teachers will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

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

**He/she should not investigate** - this is a matter for the Social Services and the PSNI - but should report these concerns immediately to the designated member of staff, discuss the matter with him/her and complete a Note of Concern (Appendix 4) which should be returned to the designated teacher within 24 hours of the incident/disclosure along with any notes taken at the time of the disclosure.

The designated member of staff will discuss the matter with the Principal and contact the Child Protection Service for Schools (CPSS) as a matter of urgency for advice, and ensure that a written record is made.

The Principal, in consultation with the designated member of staff, will follow the advice from the CPSS on whether, in the best interests of the young person, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services and/or PSNI. **If there are concerns that the young person may be at risk, the Principal is obliged to make a referral.** Unless there are concerns that a parent/carer may be the possible abuser, the parents/carers will be informed immediately.

No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the young person is our first priority.

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

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (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 Principal. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

#### **2.6.2 Allegations against the Principal**

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

#### **2.6.3. Allegations against the designated member of staff**

Any complaints must be referred to the Principal.

#### **2.6.4. 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.

### **2.7 CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING**

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

Designated Teacher	Pastoral Vice-Principal
Deputy Designated Teachers	Principal
	Curriculum Vice-Principal
Duty Social Worker, Gateway Team	0800 783 7745
Year Head	Optional
Group Tutor	Optional

#### **2.7.2 Record Keeping**

Any member of staff who has a concern about the welfare or safety of a young person should complete a Note of Concern (Appendix 4). Notes must be made as soon as possible after the incident to ensure an expedient response, and certainly within 24 hours, to maintain the accuracy and content of the report.

The UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will be completed whenever members of College Safeguarding Team wish to refer a young person to social services for support, safeguarding or a fuller assessment of a young person's needs.

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

### **3. SAFE RECRUITMENT MEASURES**

#### **3.1 Access NI Clearance**

The following groups must have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) from Access NI before taking up post:

- All new paid teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Examination Invigilators.
- Private contracted transport providers as approved by the Education Authority.

### **3.2 Volunteers**

Volunteers who work unsupervised are required to have an EDC. A volunteer who works under supervision is not required to obtain an EDC.

The College will ensure that volunteers, coaches, music tutor and school photographers etc, have the necessary clearances in place.

## **4. PARENTAL CONCERNS**

If a Parent/Carer has a potential child protection concern they should follow the steps identified in Appendix 3.

## **5. 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 Education Authority.

## **6. 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.

## **7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

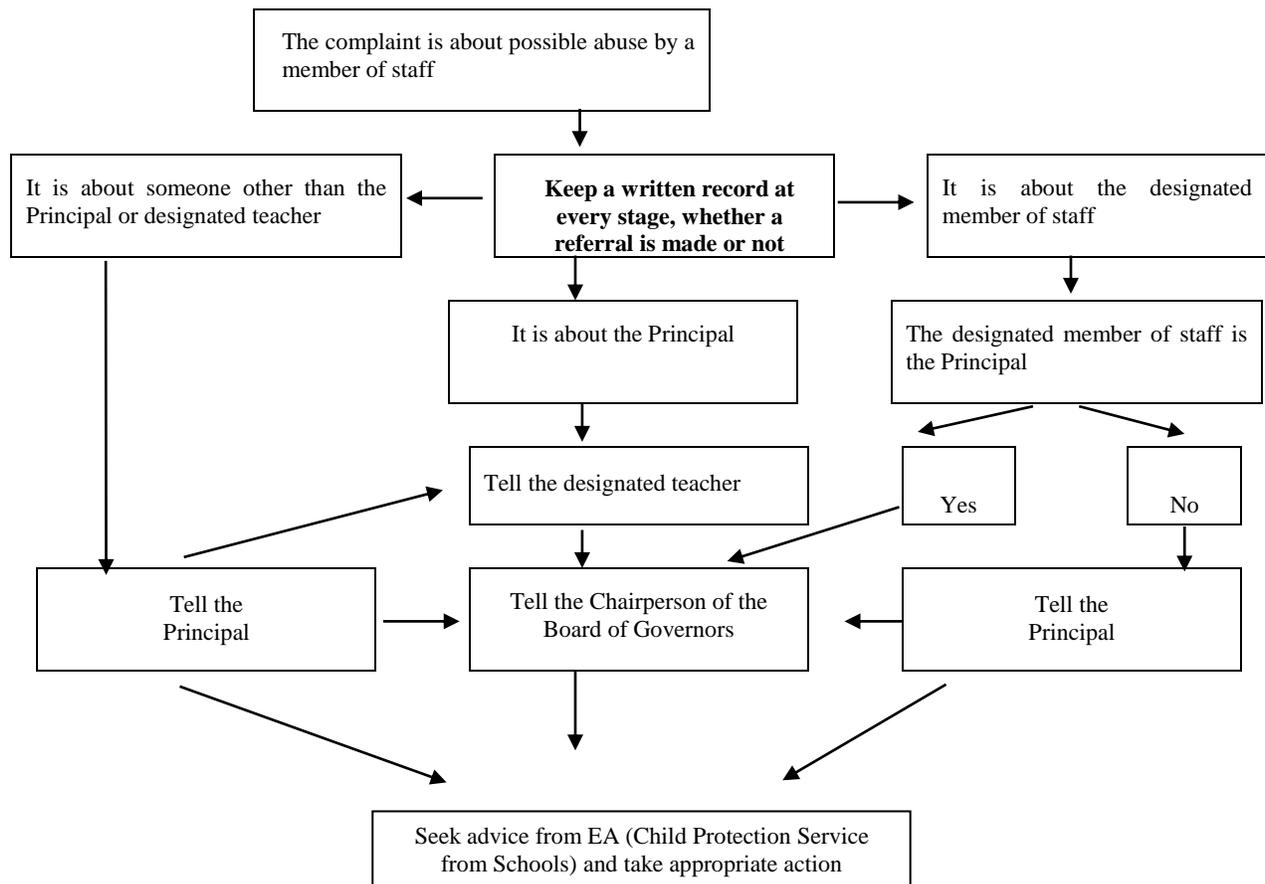
The College will update this Policy and Procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary, and review it annually. Participation and consultation with students and parents will be undertaken.

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.

Updates to Policy approved by the Board of Governors – June 2015.  
Amendments to Policy approved by the Board of Governors – 18 January 2018.  
Amendments to Policy approved by the Board of Governors – 7 November 2019.  
Amendments to Policy approved by the Board of Governors – 22 September 2022.

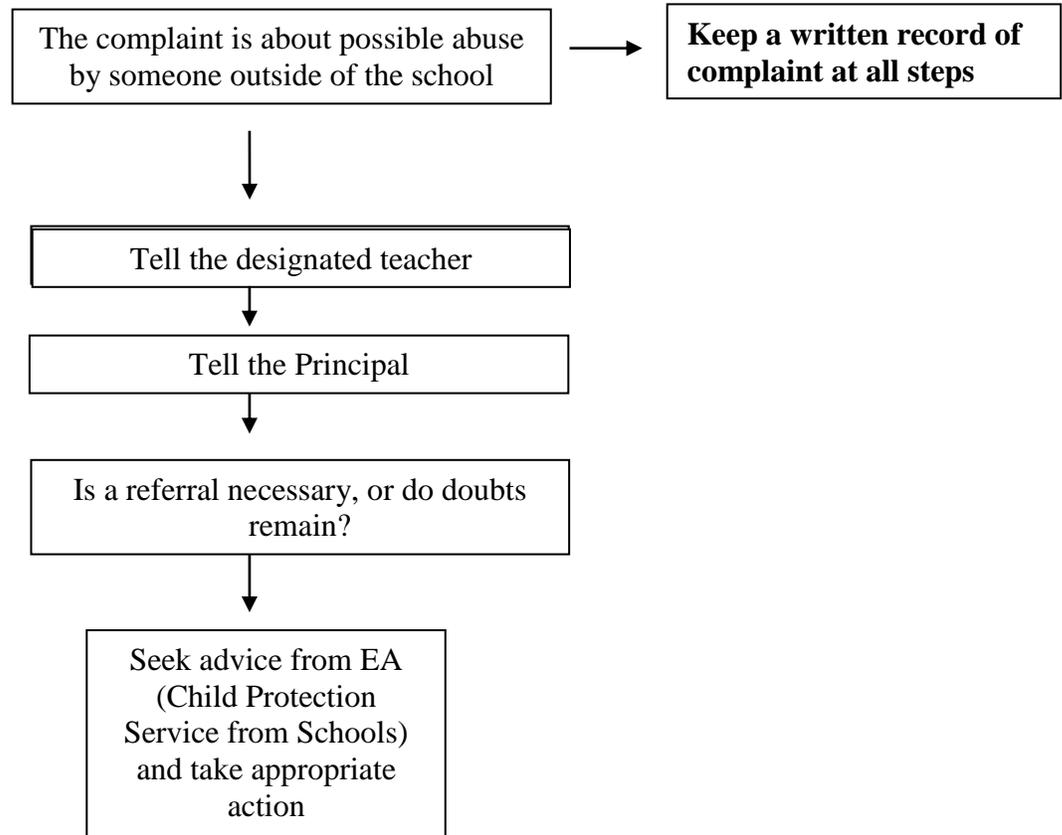
## Appendix 1

### PROCEDURE WHERE A COMPLAINT HAS BEEN MADE ABOUT POSSIBLE ABUSE BY A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL'S STAFF



**Appendix 2**

**PROCEDURE WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS CONCERNS, OR HAS BEEN GIVEN INFORMATION, ABOUT POSSIBLE ABUSE BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL'S STAFF**



**FLOW CHART FOR RESPONDING TO INCIDENT OF YOUTH PRODUCED SEXUAL IMAGERY**

**Initial disclosure**  
 This could come from a student directly, a parent, a student's friend.

- 5 points for referral:
1. Adult involvement
  2. Coercion or blackmail
  3. Extreme or violent
  4. Under 13 years
  5. Immediate risk of harm

**Initial review with safeguarding team**

At this initial stage the Safeguarding Team review the information and consider the 5 points for immediate referral. The Safeguarding Team make an initial decision about whether the incident can be dealt with in house.

- Considerations – risk assessment**
- Vulnerability of the young person
  - Coercion
  - How shared and where
  - Impact on young person
  - Age of the young person

**Consult with CPSS for advice and take appropriate action.**

**Risk assessment/Dealing with the incident**

Consider the risk of harm and at any point if there are 'causes for concern' the Safeguarding Team can refer back to CPSS/PSNI/Social Services.

**Management in school**

Ensure parents are informed and the incident recorded following all child protection and safeguarding procedures.

**Appendix 4**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**NOTE OF CONCERN**

**CHILD PROTECTION RECORD – REPORT TO DESIGNATED TEACHER**

<b>Name of student:</b>
<b>Year Group:</b>
<b>Date/time of incident/disclosure:</b>
<b>Circumstances of incident/disclosure:</b>
<b>Nature and description of incident:</b>
<b>Parties involved, including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom:</b>
<b>Action taken at the time:</b>

**Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:**

**Any further action taken:**

**Written report passed to the Designated Teacher:**  
YES  NO   
**If 'No' state reason:**

**Date and time of report to the Designated Teacher:**

**Written note from staff member placed on student's Child Protection file**  
YES  NO   
**If 'No' state reason:**

**Name of staff member making the report:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of staff member:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Designated Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_