



## Portadown College Child Protection Code of Conduct for Staff 2022

### Introduction

The policy and procedures contained in the Code of Conduct pertain to all staff (teaching and support staff) and volunteers in Portadown College.

### Rationale

All actions concerning 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 young people in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the school. Rather, 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.

Safeguarding encompasses more than child protection and begins with promotion and preventative activity which enables young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

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

The Policy has taken account of DENI Circular 2017/04 (Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools - Update) and DENI ‘Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools’ Guide (June 2022).

### Code of Conduct:

#### Private Meetings with Students

- a. Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from one to one meetings or teaching sessions with a student though there may be times when they are necessary. As far as possible, staff should conduct such meetings or teaching sessions in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- b. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another member of staff knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.

- c. Where possible another student or (preferably) another member of staff should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.
- d. Paid private tuition for young people (including those who are not members of the College community) on College property and during contractual hours is not permitted.

### Physical Contact with Students

- a. As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their students. All staff have a responsibility to maintain confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. Integral to this is a clear understanding of standards of behaviour expected and in particular the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with students. School staff must accept that all physical contact can be open to scrutiny and that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued (see section g. below).
- b. However, it is unrealistic and unnecessary to suggest that staff should avoid all physical contact. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times. As a general rule, when physical contact is made with students this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Appropriate physical contact in schools may occur most often with younger students, for example, physical comforting can give welcome reassurance to a distressed younger child.
- b. Staff should never touch a young person who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the young person, others or property from harm. Please refer to the College Behaviour Management Policy for more information on the use of reasonable force.
- 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 student should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other students 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 student, 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 verbal report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or if unavailable, another member of the Safeguarding Team. A written report will be required within a timescale agreed with the Designated Teacher. The report should detail:
  - Date and time of the incident
  - Location of the incident
  - Nature of the incident
  - Names of any witnesses
- h. Staff should be particularly careful when supervising students 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 students in circumstances very different from the normal school environment.

Staff should not give students their mobile phone number, nor is it advisable to contact students on their personal mobile phone. Staff should only communicate with students through official school communication systems. These precautions will protect staff as, when information is shared, there is no control over how that information is used or where it will go. Staff should refer to the Online Safety Policy for guidance. If concerns are brought to Portadown College in relation to the inappropriate use of social media and/or technology, the Board of Governors may have to follow Portadown College's safeguarding procedures.

### Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- a. If possible teachers should avoid teaching materials, the contents of which might be misinterpreted.
- b. If using teaching materials of a sensitive nature the teacher should reflect on all potential outcomes prior to their use and prepare for any difficulties which may arise because of their use.
- c. If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult colleagues and the Principal.

### Relationships and Attitudes

Staff should ensure that their relationships with students are appropriate to the age, maturity and gender of the students, 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 young people of the age range within our school.

### Sexting – 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. See the Child Protection Policy for further information.

Adults should never view youth produced sexual imagery unless there is good and clear reason to do so. Staff should report any incident of youth produced sexual imagery to a member of the Safeguarding Team immediately. If the imagery is on a school computer/laptop/tablet etc it should be kept in a secure location where no one can access the imagery. Advice will then be sought from the Child Protection Service for Schools (CPSS) before any further action is taken.

If youth produced sexual imagery has been unavoidably viewed by a member of staff either following a disclosure from a young person or as a result of a member of staff undertaking their daily role (such as ICT staff monitoring school systems) then members of the Safeguarding Team will ensure that the staff member is provided with appropriate support. Viewing youth produced sexual imagery can be distressing for both young people and adults and appropriate emotional support may be required.

### **Deletion of images**

If the College is advised that other agencies do not need to be involved, then consideration should be given to deleting imagery from devices and online services to limit any further sharing of the imagery.

The Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice highlights that schools have the power to search students for devices, search data on devices and delete youth produced sexual imagery. However, it is recommended that in most cases young people are asked to delete imagery and to confirm that they have deleted the imagery. Young people should be given a deadline for deletion across all devices, online storage or social media sites.

All of these decisions need to be recorded, including times, dates and reasons for decisions made and logged in the safeguarding records. Parents and carers should also be informed unless this presents a further risk to the young person. At this point the College Code of Conduct may be invoked to discourage young people from sharing, creating or receiving images.

### Access NI Clearance

The following groups must have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) from Access NI before taking up post (DE Circular 2013/01 – updated September 2015):

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

### Volunteers

Volunteers who work unsupervised are required to have an EDC.

A volunteer who works under supervision is not required to obtain an EDC, however, the Designated Teacher should be consulted to determine whether the level of supervision meets the statutory standard (DE Circular 2012/19).

### Visitors to Schools

Visitors to schools, such as parents, suppliers of goods and services, to carry out maintenance etc do not routinely need to be vetted before being allowed onto school premises. However, such visitors should be managed by College staff and their access to areas and movement within the school should be restricted as needs require.

Visitors should be:

- Met/directed by College staff/representatives.
- Signed in and out of the College by College staff.
- If appropriate, be given restricted access to only specific areas of the College.
- Where possible, escorted by a member of staff/representative.
- Clearly identified with visitor/contractor passes.
- Access to students restricted to the purpose of their visit.
- If delivering goods or carrying out building/maintenance or repair tasks their work should be cordoned off from students for health and safety reasons.

### Students on Work Experience

Health and Social Care Programmes will require an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate for students on long term placement and may be required for students on work experience/shadowing placements. Staff should refer to DE Circular 2013/01 for more information.

Students coming into the school on work experience do not require Access NI clearance if they are fully supervised by College staff. The normal child protection induction processes should apply.

## Record Keeping

A Child Protection File is separate to the School Student Record. All Child Protection Records are held securely in a confidential manner.

Electronic files must be encrypted and appropriately password protected.

Any member of staff who has a concern about the welfare or safety of a young person should complete a Note of Concern (Appendix 1). 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 Note of Concern and any further details discussed or action taken will be placed on the student's **Child Protection File**.

The '**Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland**' (UNOCINI) is a framework to support professionals in assessment and planning to better meet the needs of children and their family. The UNOCINI referral form will be completed whenever staff wish to refer a young person to children's social services for support, safeguarding or a fuller assessment of a young person's needs.

The consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) must normally be given prior to a referral. An exception can be made when a young person is in need of safeguarding and to try and gain consent may increase the risk to a young person. Issues of consent (including when consent is not forthcoming) must always be clearly recorded.

The time periods for the retention of child protection records are listed in Appendix 2.

## Sharing Information

When considering what information can be shared, including on transfer to another school, staff must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). In all cases the information should be adequate, relevant and not excessive.

Within the College information will only be shared with staff who require access to it, in order to work in a safe and informed way with the young person and their family. All staff should understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the consequences of any breach.

Information must always be shared with other agencies where there is a legal duty to do so e.g. PSNI and Social Services. It should, however, be noted that the PSNI have no automatic right to access data and must complete **Form 81**, stating the data they require and the specific case to which it relates. The Designated Teacher for Child Protection, or one of the Deputies, must be in receipt of the completed Form 81 before any information is released. The Form 81 will be stored in the relevant file in the locked Child Protection Filing Cabinet.

Consent to share information should be sought where possible, however, sharing, even without consent, will normally be justified, if there is evidence of reasonable cause to believe that a young person is suffering, or is at risk of suffering harm.

Child Protection is a standing agenda item for Board of Governor meetings **and** the Designated Teacher prepares a report for these meetings of all child protection issues and a full annual report on all Child Protection matters. All reports are anonymised in keeping with the principle of confidentiality.

## 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 young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances, a member of staff's professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice.

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

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

**The designated teacher for child protection is the Pastoral Vice Principal.** In his/her absence, one of the deputy designated teachers for child protection 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 in the following manner.**

- 1. He/she should not investigate** but should report concerns immediately to the designated teacher and discuss the matter with him/her. A note of Concern (Appendix 1) must be completed and returned to the designated teacher within 24 hours of the incident/disclosure along with any notes taken at the time of the disclosure. It should be noted that **information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'**. In the interests of the young person, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told.
2. The designated teacher 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.
3. The Principal, in consultation with the designated teacher, 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, we are obliged to make a referral.** Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.
4. 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.**
5. Where there are concerns about possible abuse, the Principal will inform the Social Services and/or PSNI.
6. If a complaint about possible abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal or the designated teacher, if s/he 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 students, 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.

7. If a complaint is made against the Principal, the designated teacher (or their deputy, if they are not available) must be informed immediately. S/he will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.
8. If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do, if he/she has concerns about a young person, or is unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the designated teacher.

Policy updates agreed by the Board of Governors - June 2015.

Amendments agreed by the Board of Governors – 18 January 2018.

Amendments agreed by the Board of Governors – 7 November 2019.

Amendments agreed by the Board of Governors – 22 September 2022.

**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>
<b>Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:</b>
<b>Any further action taken:</b>
<b>Written report passed to the Designated Teacher:</b> <b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b> <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>If 'No' state reason:</b>
<b>Date and time of report to the Designated Teacher:</b>
<b>Written note from staff member placed on student's Child Protection file</b> <b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b> <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>If 'No' state reason:</b>

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

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

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

## Appendix 2 – Retention of Records

<b>Record</b>	<b>Retention Period</b>
Student Child Protection Case Files	DOB + 30 years
The school's confidential Record of Child Abuse Complaints	Indefinitely*
If Social Services inform the school that a child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register	Maintain a record of this fact and associated documentation from Social Services on the child's file while he/she continues to attend. On transfer, the school should inform the new school and destroy all social services records. The record on the Child Protection File will remain until D.O.B + 30 years.
If Social Services inform the school that a child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register	On transfer to a new school, the school should destroy any child protection records on the child supplied by Social Services, including records of case conferences. The record on the Child Protection File will remain until D.O.B + 30 years.
<b>Complaint against a member of staff</b> Staff members file <sup>1</sup> Child's Child Protection File Record of Child Abuse Complaints	Indefinitely* unless totally exonerated (see para. 2.72 of Child Protection Policy) D.O.B + 30 years Indefinitely*
<b>Complaint to be pursued under the school's disciplinary procedures</b>	
Staff members file Child's Child Protection File Record of Child Abuse Complaints	5 years D.O.B + 30 years Indefinitely*

\* as a general guide 'indefinitely' should be a minimum of 40 years.

<sup>1</sup> The Department of Education Disposal Schedule recommends that a staff file is retained for 7 years after leaving employment. In the case of child protection concerns the file should be retained for the time periods specified in the school Child Protection Records Retention and Destruction Policy.

## Appendix 3 – Key Contacts

PSNI Central Referral Unit	Email: <a href="mailto:cru@psni.police.uk">cru@psni.police.uk</a> Monday - Friday 8:00 – 18:00. Weekends and Public Holidays 9:00 – 17:00
Social Services Gateway Team (Children and Young People)	028 3756 7100 or 0800 783 7745
Social Services (Vulnerable Adults, 18+)	02837564423 (Monday – Friday) 02895049999 (Out of hours)