



# POLICY FOR PASTORAL CARE and CHILD PROTECTION

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## INTRODUCTION

The governors and staff of Ballyclare Nursery School fully recognise the contribution it makes to safeguarding children. We recognise that all staff, including volunteers, have a full and active part in protecting our pupils from harm.

All staff and Governors believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social physical and moral development of the individual child.

This policy is informed by the guidance and procedures set out by DE 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection (1999) and the Area Child Protection Committees' (ACPC) Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

The central thrust of The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 is that *the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration* in all decision concerning the child. This is also reflected in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - *the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration*. The 'paramountcy' of the child principle underpins our Child Protection policy and procedures.

*Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school. The purpose of the procedures set out in this policy is to safeguard and protect our pupils by ensuring that every adult 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. The issue 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.*

There are five main elements to our policy:

1. Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop
2. Developing and implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse
3. Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children
4. Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe

5. Supporting pupils who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan

## **THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM AT BALLYCLARE NURSERY SCHOOL**

**Chair of Governors:** Bobby Thompson

**Principal and Designated Teacher for Child Protection:** Janine Burns

**Principal and Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection:** Emma Corry

### **WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

(A child is a person under the age of 18 years as defined in the Children Order)

Child Abuse occurs when 'a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children maybe abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely by a stranger.' (ACPC, 2005)

#### **Types of Abuse**

**Physical Abuse** - is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour. (ACPC, 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms of physical abuse include:

- Unexplained bruises (in places difficult to mark)
- Human bite marks, welts or bald spots
- Unexplained lacerations, fractions or abrasions
- Untreated injuries
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Chronic runaway
- Fear of going home

**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 conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse. (ACPC, 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms of emotional abuse include:

- Bullying of others
- Change in personality from outgoing to withdrawn
- Difficulty in forming / maintaining relationships with others
- Depression
- Signs of mutilation
- Attention seeking
- Chronic runaway
- Wetting and soiling
- Sudden speech disorders
- Low self-esteem

**Sexual Abuse** - involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children to look at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. (ACPC, 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- Bruised or sore genitals
- Genital infection
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Inappropriate sexualised language or behaviour
- Low self-esteem
- Chronic depression
- Substance abuse
- Personality changes
- Fear of going home

**Neglect** - is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may

involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive. (ACPC, 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms of neglect include:

- Poor hygiene
- Constant hunger/cramming food
- Inadequate / inappropriate clothing
- Constant tiredness
- Exposed to danger / lack of adequate supervision
- Untreated illness
- Lack of peer relationships
- Compulsive stealing / begging

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

## **Bullying Policy**

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in Ballyclare Nursery School.

It is uncommon for children of Nursery age to purposely bully another child. As part of our everyday curriculum we support our children through personal, emotional and social development so that they understand the way in which they should behave. We encourage the development of positive relationships with children having a sense of right and wrong and an understanding of their needs and feelings and those of other people.

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 the bully and the victim will be personally contacted when bullying has been identified.

Any complaints by a parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied will be fully investigated by the DT for Child Protection, and team action will be taken to protect the victim. This will usually include ensuring that another child or a group of small children befriends and supports the child being bullied during the school day. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the DT within one week of making the complaint, indicating the investigation which has been carried out and the action taken.

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of privileges in the school. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped. If a pupil's bullying behaviour persists, the second stage will be to instigate the child protection procedures.

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED (OR DISCLOSED) CHILD ABUSE**

**The designated teacher for child protection (DT)** is Janine Burns  
In his /her absence **the deputy designated teacher for child protection (DDT)** Emma Corry will assume responsibility for child protection. On the rare occasion that neither DT nor DDT is in the school, they will always be contactable by phone. In the unlikely event that they are not staff will contact Bobby Thompson, Chair of Governors.

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

**He/she should not investigate** - this is a matter for social services - but should report these concerns immediately to the DT, discuss the matter with him/her, make full notes (signing and dating them), and hand the note to the DT.

The DT will as a matter of urgency plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record of decisions is made.

The DT, will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to social services. **If there are concerns that the child may be at risk of significant harm, the school is obliged to make a referral to social services.** Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The DT may seek clarification or advice and consult with The Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) - Designated Officer for Child Protection at the EDUCATION AUTHORITY, or a senior social worker before a referral is made. No decisions to refer a child to social services will be made without full consideration and on appropriate advice. **The safety of the child is our first priority.**

Where there are concerns about possible abuse of a child, the DT will inform:

- Social Services - using the regional UNOCINI template (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland)
- EDUCATION AUTHORITY's Designated Officer for Child Protection

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal /DT must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal). Where the matter is referred to social services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils, and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigations by social services. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against the Principal, the DT must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and together they will take appropriate advice and ensure the necessary 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 signs or symptoms of possible child abuse, he/she should talk with the DT.

It should be noted that the information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. In the interests of the

child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be informed.

## **How to respond to a child who makes a disclosure**

### **1. Receive**

- Stay calm
- Listen to what the child is saying without displaying shock or disbelief
- Accept what the child is saying
- Be discreet

### **2. Reassure**

- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by talking to you, **do not make promises that you cannot keep** (eg everything will be alright now, I'll stay with you)
- Do not promise confidentiality, staff have a duty to refer the matter to the designated teacher for child protection. Explain that you will need to talk to Emma Corry who will know what to do next
- Do reassure and alleviate guilt if the child refers to it

### **3. Respond**

- Respond to the child only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer the matter to the designated teacher for child protection
- Do ask open questions (can you tell me what happened? Anything else you wish to tell me? Yes ... )
- Do not ask closed questions (those that will evoke a yes/no response, eg Did \_\_\_\_\_ do this to you?). Such questions invalidate evidence where a subsequent court action is necessary.
- Do not criticise the perpetrator as the child may love that person
- Do explain what you will do next (talk with the designated teacher who will know how to get help)

### **4. Record**

- Make notes as soon as possible after hearing what the child has said and write them up .
- Do not destroy these original notes
- Record the date, time place, people present and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour. Record the words the child used as much as possible. - if the child uses 'pet' words record those rather than translating them into 'proper' words. Any injuries or marks noticed can be depicted on a diagram showing position and extent
- Record statements and observable things, rather than your interpretations and assumptions.
- Sign the record and hand it to the designated teacher

*(All written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately, are securely maintained, separate from the main pupil file, and in a locked location.*

## **5. Refer**

- **Concerns about possible abuse must be referred to the designated teacher as soon as possible within the working day so that she may begin the decision making process regarding referral to statutory services.**

## **Supporting Vulnerable Children**

The staff of Ballyclare Nursery School recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging or they may be withdrawn.

Ballyclare Nursery School will endeavour to support the pupils who are exposed to risk of harm through supporting such pupils in accordance with his/her agreed protection plan.

Support for all pupils in the school in developing skills in self protection and developing confidence will be afforded as follows:

- The content of the curriculum, particularly Personal Development.
- The school ethos which promotes a positive supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as Social Services, Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychology, PSNI.

## **ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER (DT) AND DEPUTY DESIGNATED TEACHER (DDT)**

The DT:

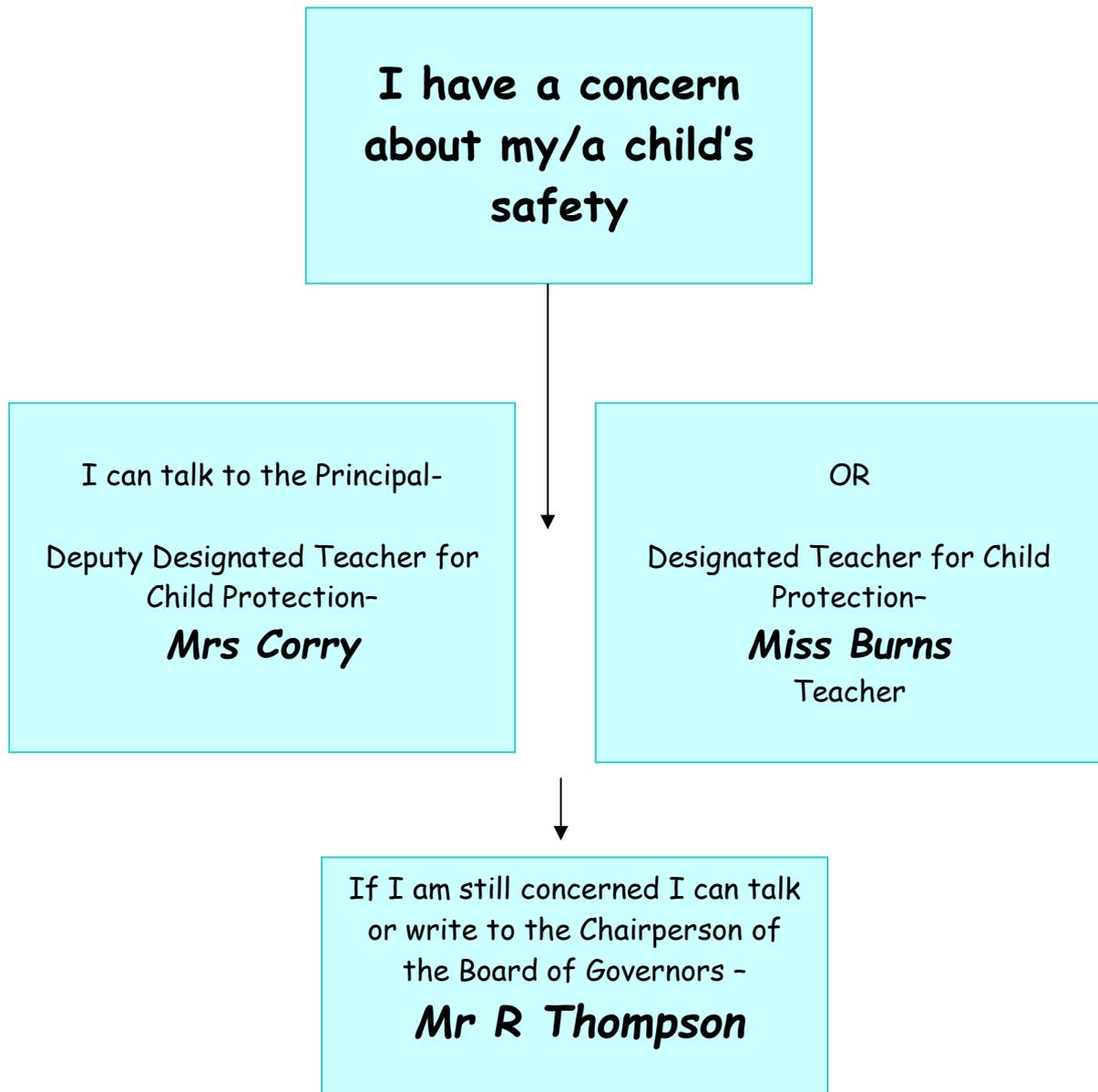
- To provide training to all school staff including support staff
- Being available to discuss the child protection concerns of any member of staff
- Responsibility for managing and keeping of all child protection concerns
- Making referrals to Social services or PSNI Public Protection Units where appropriate
- Developing effective links with relevant agencies and co-operating as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.
- Liaising with EDUCATION AUTHORITY Designated Officers for Child Protection
- The lead responsibility for the development and updating of the school's child protection policy
- Ensures new parents receive a copy of the child protection policy on their child's entry to the Nursery which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made and the role of the school on this
- Promotion of a child protection ethos in the school
- Written reports to the Board of Governors regarding child protection- Termly
- Maintains all records pertaining to child protection in a secure location (accessed only by The Safeguarding Team as appropriate)

DDT:

To support and undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection as required

## HOW A PARENT OR CARER CAN RAISE A CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN

If a parent or carer has a child protection concern they can follow the guide below:



At anytime, I can talk to  
The Police  
(02890 650222)  
OR  
A social worker:  
GATEWAY: 0300 1234333

## **VETTING PROCEDURES**

The selection and appointment process is the starting point for ensuring that only those who are suitable are employed to work in close proximity with children, in either a paid or unpaid capacity.

In order that all reasonable steps are taken to employ and engage suitable staff to work with the children in our care we follow the guidance on pre-employment checking and safe recruitment practices provided by the Department of Education:

- DE Circular 2006/06. Child Protection : Recruitment of People to Work with Children and Young People in Educational Settings
- DE Circular 2006/07. Child Protection: Employment of Substitute Teachers
- DE Circular 2006/08 Child Protection: Training Requirements for School Governors on Staff Recruitment and Selection Panels
- DE Circular 2006/09 Child Protection: Criminal Background Checking of Staff in Schools - Programme to Extend Coverage
- DE Circular 2006/25 Child Protection: Vetting of School Governors
- DE Circular 2008/03 Pre-Employment Checking of Persons to Work in Schools - New Arrangements
- Circular 2012/19 - Changes to pre-employment vetting checks for volunteers working in schools
- Circular 2011/22 - Internet safety

- Circular 2010/01 - Guidance on relationships and sexuality education
- Circular 2015/13 - Dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff
- Circular 2016/05 - Children who display harmful sexualised behaviour
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Copies of these circulars are available on the DE website: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk). Click on 'Circulars'

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF**

The code of conduct is known to all staff - permanent and non-permanent and volunteers. It reflects the safeguarding ethos of the school and is set out in Appendix 2

## **THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM**

We recognise that the school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our pupils by providing pupils with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection. The school community will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to
- Ensure that all children have excellent relationships with all staff whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty
- Include in the curriculum opportunities for Personal and Social Development which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to whom they should turn for help if the need arises.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY AND IMAGES OF CHILDREN**

**We seek parental permission for all children in order to take photographs and use them in a variety of ways, such as: around school, for the promotion of the school and events, our website, sharing good practice with other professionals.**

### **EDUCATIONAL TRIPS / VISITS**

Parental permission is required for each visit we make. We ensure that any parent who is helping on a visit and looking after a child other than their own is fully vetted through the *Education Authority's* vetting procedures.

We gain parental permission at the beginning of each year so that we are able to take our children out on short walks in the local area as required throughout the year.

### **INTIMATE CARE**

We gain parental permission at the beginning of every year to allow staff to clean and undress children if they have a toileting accident are hurt or unwell.

We also gain parental permission to reapply sun cream to children in hot weather after it has been initially applied by the parent prior to coming to Nursery.

### **REVIEWING OUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

We will review our child protection policy every year to ensure that it is up to date and in line with current policy and procedure.

## **Appendix 1**

### **GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers have an important and beneficial role in supporting the work of teachers and other support staff in Ballyclare Nursery School and in contributing, by their efforts and initiative, to the life of the school.

It is essential however, that appropriate steps are taken, through screening and selection arrangements, to ensure that children are not placed at risk through allowing the unsupervised and unmanaged access of unsuitable adults to the school.

#### **Who is a Volunteer?**

A volunteer is an individual who, subject to the satisfactory procedures below, either

1. Assumes unpaid duties in a school on a regular basis on more than two occasions or
2. is engaged by the school to accompany or assist in school visits or trips

Formal arrangements as to selection and vetting should not be required for volunteers who are involved outside school hours and who do not have unsupervised contact with pupils. These would include fund raisers, people using school premises for meetings etc.

#### **Use of Volunteers**

There are three main categories into which the use of volunteers might be grouped and to which guidance will apply:

- During school hours involving direct contact with Pupils
- Outside school hours involving direct contact with pupils
- During school hours but not usually involving direct contact with Pupils

#### **Recruiting and Selecting Volunteers**

The school may canvass for volunteers or people may come forward to offer assistance at their own initiative. In many cases potential volunteers may already be known to the school. Others may come forward from the local community.

## **Initial Appraisal**

As a minimum requirement all potential volunteers are asked to provide the following information:

- personal details
- qualifications and previous work with children
- a declaration that they have never been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound-over Order
- a declaration as to whether they have been investigated by Social Services for child protection
- agree to a criminal record being carried out
- provide the name of two referees who are not family members or members of staff in the school
- attend an interview with the school Principal with proof of identity
- Undergo an annual criminal record check through Access NI (via EDUCATION AUTHORITY)

No individual will be admitted to the school as a volunteer until these basic steps have been completed and the results assessed.

## **Accepting Volunteers**

Where the previous procedures have been followed as appropriate and the school is satisfied that:

- the volunteer is a suitable person to have contact with the children and has the character, skills and experience to support the work of the school in a voluntary capacity;
- well defined and worthwhile activities have been identified for the volunteer to undertake and he/she is competent to undertake them;
- the Principal had followed correct vetting procedures and has received notification that the volunteer is suitable to work with children

The school will notify the individual that he/she has been accepted for voluntary duties in the school

## **The use of Volunteers**

These are the fundamental principles observed when using volunteers:

- the purpose of the volunteer is to assist staff, whether teaching or non-teaching. They are not used as substitutes either to cover activities normally undertaken by paid staff who are absent, or to release such staff to undertake other duties;
- volunteers only work under the supervision and guidance of paid staff and these arrangements should be such as to minimise the opportunities for direct, unsupervised, access to children;
- volunteers are not placed in a position of sole responsibility for the security of children, premises or equipment;
- volunteers should understand the tasks they are to undertake and receive appropriate training to enable them to perform these;
- volunteers are only allocated duties after consultation and agreement with the teacher or other member of staff with whom the volunteer will be closely involved. Teachers are not to be placed under any pressure to accept a volunteer in their classroom;
- volunteers are not afforded access to records or other information relating to staff or pupils. An exception might be made where a child has a medical or other condition of which all those working with the pupil should be made aware, and where agreement of the parent has been sought.

### **Health and Safety Insurance**

Volunteers are owed a duty of care under the requirements of Health and Safety Legislation. Ballyclare Nursery School therefore ensures that volunteers are treated no less favourably than paid employees in terms of the school's obligations under the legislation.

### **Duration**

Ballyclare Nursery School places a time limit on the period of the volunteer's service. This is done where the work earmarked for the volunteer is likely to be completed within a specific period. Where a

volunteer's involvement is likely to be long term, the school advises the volunteer that he/she will be subject to a trial period, during which the Principal monitors the volunteer's effectiveness in contributing to the life and work of the school.

### **Information and Training**

The school ensures that the volunteer receives such information, guidance, preparation and where necessary, training to enable him/her to perform tasks effectively. As a minimum, volunteers are briefed on:

- the policy of the school and the management authority in relation to pastoral care and child protection, including its behaviour/discipline policy, including rewards and sanctions, and the extent of the volunteer's authority within it; its child protection procedures
- the Health and Safety Policy

### **School Security**

- All visitors to Ballyclare Nursery are required to sign in at the beginning of their visit.
- All visitors are to identify themselves to the Principal, or if she is not available, to another member of staff.
- No visitors are to be left unattended with children at any time during their visit.

## Appendix 2

### A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF

(Pastoral Care in Schools CHILD PROTECTION 1999)

All staff and volunteers are aware of and have received a copy of our code of conduct. The Code is informed by guidance from DE.

This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences our children gain from positive interaction with staff. 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.

#### Physical Contact with Pupils

At Ballyclare Nursery School we love and care for our children. We hug them, console them, hold their hands and show them affection.

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.

Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

Staff who administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure whenever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. This is often not possible due to the low numbers of staff employed within our Nursery. *No member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*

Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or maybe, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal.

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

Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised.

If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

### **Relationships and Attitudes**

Staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought. Staff are aware that they are in a position of trust in relation to the children and young people at the school.

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

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

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise 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/carers.

Emma Corry  
2020