

Child Protection Policy



Policy Statement

- The College is required by legislation to have a Child Protection Policy
- This policy has been created using all discoverable guidance issued by the Department and the various boards.

Summary:

This policy tries to set clear guidance as to the College's procedures and structures in relation to Child Protection.

The policy tries to be rational in its approach, although there will always be exceptions to the general principles.

It is of the utmost importance that all staff read and understand the guidance offered herein.

Governor staffing / policy group reviewed Sept 2016.

Presented to staff Oct 2016.

Ratified by BOG Oct 20th 2016

Colin Jones
Pastoral Coordinator
September 2016

Additional Notes

Policy Number: 2016/9

History

This new policy was created July 2008 in consultation with the Leadership Team

Drafted between July 2008 and September 2008

Final version for presentation to Governors October 2008

Reviewed June 2009, June 2010, June 2011, June 2012, September 2013, May 2015,

Amended September 2013

Amended May 2015

Amended September 2016

To be reviewed annually

Documents superseded: 2008/4, 2009/7, 2010/4. 2011/4. 2012/6. 2013/5. 2015/5

Introduction

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

All our staff have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staff of the College have also adopted a Code of Practice for our behaviour towards students.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our students by ensuring that everyone who works in our school - teachers, and non-teaching staff - has clear guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child, and the welfare of each child is our paramount consideration. The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

In accordance with the aims and objectives of the school and to fulfil the Children Order (NI) 1995, reinforcing the statutory obligation on the education sector to play its part in the reporting and prevention of child abuse, this policy aims to ensure adequate protection for all our students.

Related policies include Attendance, Anti Bullying, RSE, Behaviour and Relationships, Intimate Care and Drugs Policy.

Specific Aims of Child Protection Policy

1. To inform all staff (teaching and non-teaching) of statutory requirements re suspected or alleged child abuse.
2. To provide all staff with definitions of abuse.
3. To provide guidelines for identification of signs of suspected abuse.
4. To enable parents to make a complaint if necessary.
5. To provide clear procedures for staff to follow up a case of suspected abuse.
6. To explain the roles and obligations of personnel involved in reporting suspected abuse.
7. To provide guidelines for the personal safety of staff dealing with students.
8. To provide support for staff to cope with the anxieties of initial reporting, and the aftermath of involvement in suspected abuse.
9. To promote self-protection for students through Personal Development Programmes, to help them recognise and deal with potentially dangerous situations.

Categories of Child Abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in a residential, hospital or institutional setting or in a community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.

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. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substances misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

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 (faltering growth).

Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or 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.

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation 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 in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non therapeutic reasons.

Young Person whose Behaviour places them at Risk of Significant Harm- a child whose own behaviours, such as alcohol consumption or consumption of illegal drugs, whilst placing the child at risk of significant harm, may not necessarily constitute abuse as defined for the purpose of the Child Protection Procedures. If the child has achieved sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind then the decision to initiate a child protection action in such cases is a matter for a professional judgement and each case should be alert to the possibility that a young person may be adverse to experiences in their lives which may be indicative of abuse.

Possible Signs of Symptoms of Abuse

'Because they are in regular and frequent contact with students, school staff are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse or unexplained changes in behaviour or performances, which may indicate abuse'

(Department of Education & Science Circular 89/41)

It is not possible to give complete lists of symptoms, only indicators of abuse. The following signs do not necessarily point to abuse, as they can be due to other medical or social reasons, but if staff are concerned by any or a combination of these signs; they should pass on their concerns to the relevant staff.

1. Signs of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained injuries or burns particularly if they are recurrent
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Admission of punishment, which appears excessive
- Fear of parents being contacted (most will get upset by this but it is the *extent* of reaction that you need to look for)
- Bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home

- Fear of medical help
- Self- destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Chronic running away

2. Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Physical, mental, and emotional development lags
- Admission of punishment, which appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour
- Self- mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing/scavenging

3. Signs of Neglect

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciation
- Frequent lateness or non- attendance
- Untreated medical problems
- destructive tendencies
- Low self- esteem
- Neurotic behaviour
- No social relationships
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing/scavenging

4. Signs of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Young people from the age of 12 may:

- be chronically depressed/suicidal
- Use drugs/drink excessively/ self mutilate
- have unexplained pregnancies
- Anorexic/bulimic
- run away repeatedly
- inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age
- be fearful about certain people like relatives and friends
- Not allowed to go on dates or have friends around
- have soreness, bleeding in the genital or anal areas or in the throat
- find excuses not to go home or to a particular place
- have recurring nightmares/be afraid of the dark
- be unable to concentrate/play truant
- exhibit a sudden change in school/work habits
- have a 'friend' who has a problem and then tell about the friend
- have chronic ailments such as stomach pains/upsets and headaches
- Sexually abuse a child sibling or friend
- be withdrawn, isolated/become excessively worried
- have outbursts of anger or irritability
- be fearful of undressing for gym
- have unexplained sums of money or valuables without plausible explanation

5. Signs of FGM or that it is imminent

- prolonged return to country of origin for summer break
- female elder visiting from a country of origin
- girls may disclose that she is to have a special procedure or attend a special occasion to become a woman
- parents state that they are to take the child out of the country for a prolonged period
- not allowed to attend extra curricular activities
- changes in behaviour/personality

Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection is Mr C Jones.

In his absence Mrs H McBrearty/Mrs J Millington are the Deputy Designated Teachers and will assume responsibility for Child Protection matters.

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.**

Child abuse is a criminal offence and in any case of suspected child abuse must be reported, irrespective of the source of information. A student cannot be given any undertaking of confidentiality but should be assured that only those who need to know will be informed. If a student discloses a possible pregnancy the school policy is to inform the Designated Teacher who will inform the parent of the child and then take appropriate action.

If a student reveals an allegation of abuse, the information must be treated seriously. Staff should be aware that the way in which they talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence, which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings, and the extent of questioning should be therefore kept to a minimum:

They should not ask the child leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind;

They should not, therefore ask questions, which encourage the child to change his/her version of events in any way, or impose the adult's own assumptions. For example, staff should say, 'Tell me what has happened', rather than 'Did they do X to you?'

He/she should not investigate - this is a matter for the Social Services - but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher, discuss the matter with him/her and make full notes. These should include:

- The nature of the information;
- Who gave it?
- The time, date and circumstances;
- Where the concern relates to signs or symptoms of possible abuse, a description of these.
- See Recording Notes (Page 19)

Information from the student or any given parent, carer or adult should be written down as soon as possible and the record should be objective, factual and detailed. These reports will be filed by the Designated Teacher. These notes could be used in court.

The Designated Teacher will discuss the matter with the Principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record is made. The Principal or Designated Teacher should supplement the record with:

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

The Principal, in consultation with the Designated Teacher, 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, the school 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 Principal/Designated Teacher may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Education Authorities Designated Officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice.

The safety of the child is our first priority.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse or a disclosure about domestic violence the Principal/Designated Teacher will inform:

- Social Services
- Education Authorities Designated Officer for Child Protection

(This will be done in an envelope marked 'CONFIDENTIAL - CHILD PROTECTION')

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the Designated Teacher, if 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 Chair of the Board of Governors should be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Designated Teacher (or the Vice-Principal, if he is not available) must be informed immediately. He will inform the Chair of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

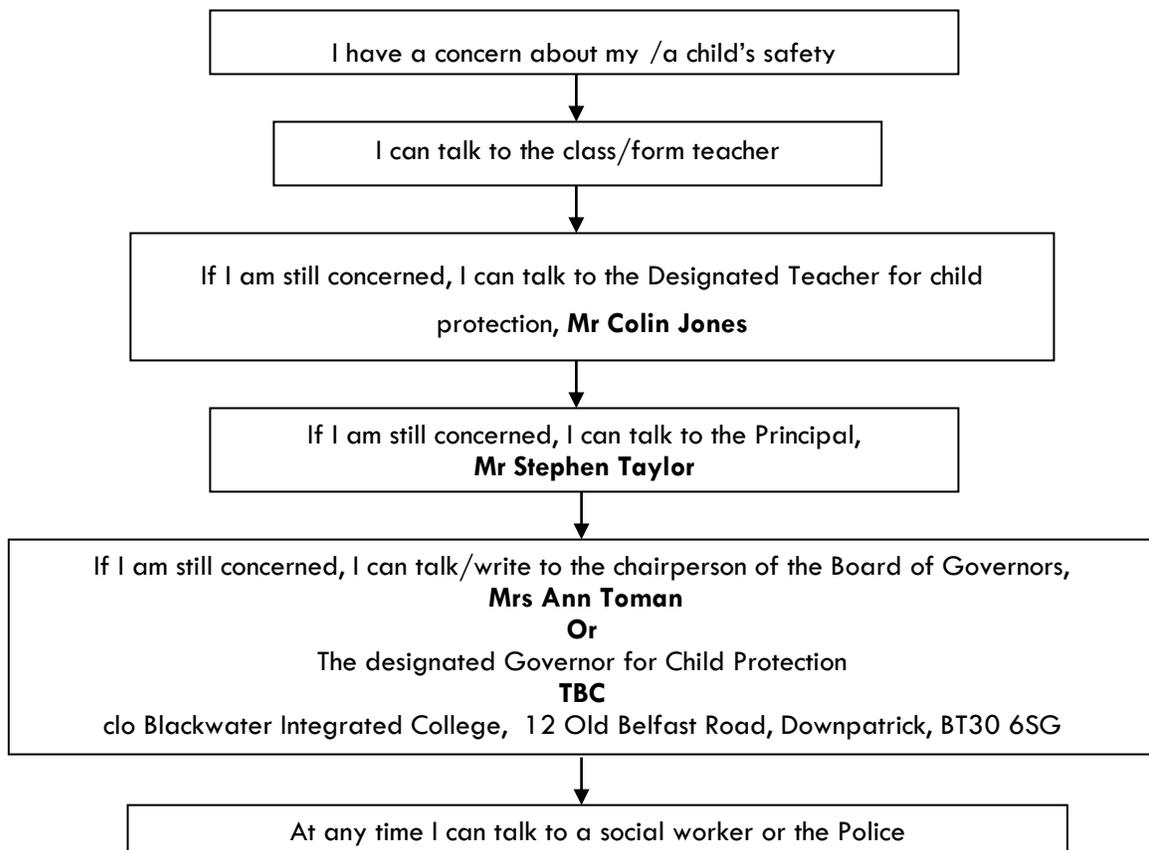
If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do if he/she has concerns about a child, or unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the Designated Teacher.

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

Guidance for Parents

Parents need to know how to proceed if they are concerned about the possible abuse of their child in school. If a parent has a concern about the safety of his/her own child or any other child who is a student of the school the parent/guardian should contact the Designated Teacher for Child Protection without delay.

The following steps are recommended:



Complaints against school staff.

Procedures to be followed:

1. A complaint or allegation may be made, in the context of child protection, about the conduct or activities of a member of staff at the school towards a child or children. If the complaint has not been made directly to the Principal and he is not the subject of the complaint, it should be referred directly to him by the person to whom it was made.
2. To form a clearer view on the complaint, the Principal may need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information or from others who may have relevant information. It is not, however, the responsibility of the school to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers. The school should not take action beyond that set out in the procedures established by the Education Authority to be followed in handling cases of suspected abuse.
3. Having satisfied himself that a complaint has indeed been made, the Principal should immediately:
 - inform the Designated Teacher (if he is not the subject of the complaint, who will initiate the record of the complaint;
 - consult, as a matter of urgency and in confidence, with the Designated officer of the Education Authority, to form an initial assessment as to whether or not there is sufficient substance in the allegation to warrant further action; and
 - consult the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Deciding what to do when such an allegation is made is a difficult and sensitive matter. The need to protect children must be paramount, but the need to protect members of staff against unfounded but nonetheless potentially damaging allegations must also be considered. Officers of the Education Authority are experienced in dealing with such cases and are willing to give advice to any school facing such circumstances.

In the light of any advice taken, the Principal (where he is not the subject of the complaint), in consultation with the chairperson of the Board of Governors, will decide that:

- a) the allegation is apparently without substance, and no further action is necessary; or
 - b) an immediate referral to the Social Services or the Police is warranted; or
 - c) the allegation concerns inappropriate behaviour which needs to be considered under the disciplinary procedures.
4. The following are some general examples (by no means exhaustive) of the types of complaints or allegations, and /or circumstances, in which a decision falling within these categories may be made.

a. no further action: where the Principal is able to satisfy himself immediately that it would have been impossible for the person complained of to have committed the alleged action or offence, for example where it was established that he/she was absent from the alleged location (perhaps on holiday abroad, hospitalised, on a training course or attending a conference) at the time when it is claimed the offence took place;

b. an immediate referral is warranted: where the Principal believes it was possible for the alleged offence to have been carried out by the person against whom the allegation is made; and where the allegation is sufficiently detailed and, in particular, if it is substantiated (eg by an account from a third party, or by physical evidence), in such manner that the Principal believes that the allegation may have substance. Clear, detailed allegations which give rise to concerns about possible physical abuse, or inappropriate sexual conduct, either verbal or physical, towards a child, whether or not corroborated, should always merit a referral. In particular, allegations of sexual abuse made by a child need to be investigated. Children, particularly young children, rarely fabricate claims of sexual abuse, and in such cases, the presumption should always be in favour of the protection of the child or children.

c. the complaint should be addressed under the disciplinary procedures: where the complaint relates to inappropriate teaching content or

certain types of bullying behaviour by a teacher or other member of staff.

5. A complaint made by a child or a member of a family with a history of making complaints to the school. While such a history can be borne in mind, **every** allegation of misconduct must be treated seriously and the above procedures followed.

No further action.

6. Where it is decided that no further action is necessary, it is the Principal's responsibility to:

- advise the member of staff concerned (where this has not already been done) that a complaint has been made and the nature of it; and also of the fact that it is considered to be without substance and no further action is being taken;
- advise the Designated Officer in the Education Authority of the decision taken; and
- advise the complainant, in writing, of the action taken concerning the complaint and its outcome, including information on other means of pursuing their complaint if they remain dissatisfied: for example, to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, including how he/she can be contacted through the school.

In these circumstances, the Principal should consider whether the child may have been abused by someone else, and if necessary report the matter to the Social Services for follow-up; **it may also be appropriate to consider counselling for the child and for the member of staff concerned.**

Record keeping

The Principal should place a **brief** record of the complaint on the file of the student concerned, indicating the nature of the complaint, when, by whom and to whom it was made, and a short explanation why it was considered that no further action should be taken, together with copies of any correspondence on the complaint.

A formal referral

7. Where the Principal decides that a formal referral of the complaint is necessary, it is his responsibility to ensure that the following are notified immediately:

- the Social Services or, especially where physical or sexual abuse is suspected or alleged, the Police; and
- the Designated Officer of the Education Authority. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors should bring the matter to the attention of the Board of Governors at the next available opportunity.

Precautionary suspension

8. An immediate decision will be necessary on whether the member of staff (teaching or non-teaching) who is the subject of the complaint or allegation should be suspended with pay as a precautionary measure. A member of staff of a school may be suspended only by the Principal or by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors. The employing authority must, where possible, be consulted before a suspension is imposed, or, where this is not practicable, as soon as possible thereafter. Precautionary suspension should not be automatic, and, depending on the circumstances of the case, some preliminary investigation by Social Services and/or Police may be necessary before a decision should properly be taken to suspend, even as a precautionary measure. *In all cases where the Principal has decided that a formal referral is warranted, the member of staff should be immediately removed from direct contact with children and should undertake non-contact duties; depending on the nature and severity of the allegation and the potential risk to children, it may be necessary for the member of staff to be suspended immediately.* Where the suspension is implemented by the Principal, the Chairperson or, in his/her absence, the Vice-Chairperson, must be informed immediately. All members of the Board of Governors must be informed of the suspension as soon as possible.

9. In some cases the school may be made aware of an allegation against a member of staff by the Social Services or the Police, to whom the allegation has been made directly. In any case where the Principal considers that a

child or children may be at risk, or the Police or Social Services advise that the member of staff's continued presence in the school would impede their investigation, the member of staff concerned should be suspended as a precautionary measure.

10. Once a decision has been taken to make a formal referral and that the member of staff will be suspended, he/she should be advised, in writing, of the nature of the allegation and the reason for precautionary suspension, and should also be advised to seek professional advice before making any form of response. The right of the member of staff to consult with a recognised trade union representative should always be respected. Where the member of staff is initially informed verbally of his/her suspension, written notification should follow as soon as possible.
11. The person making the complaint (and the student's parent, where different) should also be informed immediately, in writing, of the decision to make a formal referral and of the suspension of the member of staff concerned.
12. The Principal should take steps to ensure that he is kept informed of progress by the investigating agency to which the referral was made. If an allegation is substantiated, the investigation may need to be widened to determine whether other children have been involved. The Social Services and/or Police will advise on how to manage information to parents, children and other staff.

Record keeping

13. Where a formal referral is made, it is particularly important that the Principal should ensure that a detailed written record of the complaint, including dates and times, is maintained. This should include:
 - when, by whom and to whom the complaint was made;
 - what supplementary evidence, if any, was offered, from whom, and its nature;
 - details of any physical injury noted;
 - from whom advice was sought, and its nature;

- the decision taken and how, when, by whom and to whom it was conveyed, and the reasons for it;
- by whom, to whom and when the referral was made; and
- a copy of any correspondence on the complaint.

This record should be signed and dated by the Principal, countersigned by the Designated Teacher (where neither is the subject of the allegation) and retained in the school, on the files of both the child and the member of staff concerned; an entry should also be made on the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints (see below).

14. If, because of a subsequent investigation by one of the investigating agencies, the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated, the record on the file of the member of staff concerned must be expunged, and the entry in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints deleted or struck through. The record on the child's file should be noted accordingly, and should stand until the child's twenty-first birthday in case there should be subsequent complaints. In all other cases, the record on both the child's file and the staff member's file should be maintained indefinitely.

Internal inquiries by the school

15. Once a formal referral is made, the appropriate agencies will conduct their own investigation in accordance with local child protection procedures. Early action by the school to establish the nature of the allegation and consideration of whether it should be investigated should be undertaken in such a way that it does not prejudice any such subsequent action. *In particular, there must be no interference with evidence.* Any investigation by the Police or Social Services will take priority over internal inquiries by the school. Normally any internal inquiries should be held in abeyance pending the outcome of the external investigation.

Complaints to be pursued under the school's disciplinary procedures

16. A complaint may be made in the context of child protection about the conduct or behaviour of a member of staff towards a student or students which, in the opinion of the Principal, does not warrant a formal referral as a child protection matter but nevertheless warrants pursuit as a disciplinary matter. In considering such cases, the Principal should take into account:

- whether the behaviour complained of goes beyond the actions and conduct which could reasonably be expected of a teacher in encouraging reluctant students to learn; and
- whether the behaviour complained of exceeds what should properly be pursued as a disciplinary matter and does, in fact, constitute abuse, in which case the appropriate child protection procedures should be instituted.

Where the Principal takes the view that the behaviour complained of should be pursued as a disciplinary matter, the disciplinary procedures agreed in the Teachers' Negotiating Machinery and issued to all schools should be followed, **but in addition** the Principal should ensure that details of the complaint and the disciplinary sanction, including dates and details of all spoken communications and copies of all correspondence, are maintained on the file of both the member of staff and of the child or children concerned, for a period of 5 years, and a summary entered in the school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints. (It should be noted that this recording procedure in disciplinary cases applies **only** to those cases raised in the context of child protection.) As soon as possible after the decision is taken, the complainant should be informed that the complaint is being pursued under disciplinary procedures, and he/she should be kept regularly informed of the proceedings and the result, including the sanction taken, as appropriate.

Complaints which do not result in a conviction

17. For a variety of reasons, a complaint against a member of staff referred to one of the investigating agencies may not result in a prosecution, or a prosecution in pursuit of a complaint which is referred to Social Services or Police may not result in a conviction, even when the school believes that the evidence against the member of staff is strong and he/she represents a risk

to a child or children. Schools should be aware that in such cases it remains open to them to pursue disciplinary proceedings against the member of staff concerned, and that the burden of proof is less stringent in employment law than in criminal law. The school should seek advice from the employing authority in such cases. If the member of staff is subsequently dismissed, the employing authority should convey this in writing to the Department of Education for consideration as to whether his/her further employment as a teacher should be prohibited or restricted.

Complaint against the Principal

18. Where a member of staff receives a complaint concerning possible child abuse by the Principal, all aspects of the above procedures for complaints against a member of staff should be followed, save that the role set out above for the Principal should be exercised by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, in whom the power to suspend is vested. The employing authority should be immediately consulted in any such case.

Anonymous Information

19. The school may receive an anonymous letter or telephone call alleging abuse either by someone outside the school or by a member of staff. In such cases the Principal should consider carefully whether the allegation might have substance: as in the case of information from a named source, the impetus for action should be the potential risk to children. If the Principal believes that the allegation may have substance, he should ensure that it is referred immediately to the Social Services or Police. Again, if he is unsure about the appropriate course of action, or if unsubstantiated anonymous information is received which the Principal believes to be malicious or mischievous, the Education Authority will be able to offer advice, as will Social Services or the Police. If a referral is made, the procedures above should be followed on the same basis as a complaint from a named source, including recording arrangements.

Recording Notes

1. Notes should be written on the presumption that parents can request access to them.
2. Note takers personal feelings or reactions to clients or speculations about their motivations should not be recorded.
3. Notes should be factual and in neutral language.
4. Notes should not be stored on computer due to confidentiality.

Why take notes?

- aid memory
- protection for note taker if other party alleges something different agreed during meeting
- protection and information for the school

What to record?

- the nature of the information
- who gave it
- the time, date and circumstances
- where the concern relates to signs or symptoms of possible abuse, a description of these
- be brief, precise and factual

When

- as soon after session as possible
- during session if all parties are comfortable with that

The Principal or Designated Teacher should supplement the record with:

- details of any advice sought, from whom and when
- the decision reached as to whether the case should be referred to Social Services; and if so,

- how, when and by whom this done;
- otherwise, reasons for not referring to Social Services

A Code of Conduct for Employees within the Education sector whose work brings them into contact with the children/young people

Introduction

All actions concerning children and 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 children and young people in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

Code of Conduct

1. Private Meetings with Students

Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual students. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.

Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult 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.

Where possible another student or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

2. Physical contact with students

As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their students.

It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch students only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from doing this.

Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is or would be uncomfortable with the contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm. (DENI Circular 1999/9), on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (Power of member of staff to restrain students).

Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint. (See **Guidance** notes on page 22)

The school will, in particular circumstances, such as use of certain areas like a photographic darkroom, draw up guidelines for these circumstances.

Staff who have to administer first aid to a student should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.

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

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

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/work environment.

Guidance of Use of Reasonable Force to Restrain or Control Students

The use of reasonable force is only one of the strategies available to schools and teachers to secure students' safety and well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. All those who may have to use reasonable force with students must clearly understand the options and strategies open to them, and they must know what is regarded as acceptable action on their part and what is not.

Who may use reasonable force?

Teachers:

Article 4 of the 1998 Order authorises teachers to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a student from:

- committing an offence
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the student himself); or
- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its students whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Non-teaching staff

Other members of the staff at the school are also authorised to use reasonable force in the circumstances described above, provided they have been authorised by the Principal to have lawful control or charge of students. This might, for example, include classroom assistants, mid-day supervisors, and escorts. In addition, the authorisation could extend to education welfare officers and educational psychologists.

In determining which non-teaching staff to authorise, Principals will wish to have regard to the roles and responsibilities of the staff concerned. In particular, they should consider whether the staff have a responsibility to supervise students as part of their normal duties or whether, from time to time, they have to take on that responsibility when a teacher is not present.

Volunteers or external speakers / presenters

Suitably vetted volunteers normally work only under the supervision of a teacher or other member of staff and should not be expected to assume sole

responsibility for the safety and well-being of students. Where a situation arises, therefore, where use of reasonable force may need to be exercised, the volunteer should alert the member of staff in charge and defer to his /her judgement as to the appropriate means of handling the situation. This may be during the course of Extended Schools activities or during school hours.

Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

Teachers should avoid teaching materials, which might be misinterpreted.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by students or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. Schools have already received advice on the value of consulting parents and Governors when proposing to use materials in connection with Relationship and Sexuality Education programmes.

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

Relationships and Attitudes

Within the Pastoral Care Policies of the school and the employing authority, staff should ensure that their relationships with students are appropriate to the age, maturity, and sex 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 adolescent boys and girls.

Preventative Curriculum

Personal Development Program

The Personal Development Program is delivered through Assemblies, Outside Agencies and LLW. This gives the opportunity to highlight personal issues concerning young people and help raise self esteem.

Outside Agencies

Outside agencies who regularly contribute to promoting good health and wellbeing of the students include:

Love for Life
YMCA Sharpe Program
PIPS
PSNI
Familyworks Counselling

Outside parties in the college

All visitors to the college must sign in at reception and clearly wear a visitors badge given to them by the receptionist. On leaving the college they must return the badge and sign out.

All visiting contractors to the college are accompanied by the caretaker. He reports directly to the Principal if he has any concerns regarding visiting contractors.

Recruitment measures

All staff must complete an Access NI check before taking up their position in the college. The Principal must be in receipt of the Access NI document before any new member of staff starts work in the college.

Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young people, 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. If employees have any doubts about points in this code, or how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult their line manager or a representative of their professional association.

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