



# Child Protection policy -January 2015

## Ethos

A key role of St Joseph's Primary School & Nursery Unit is to ensure that all children feel safe and protected within the premises and community of school. The governors and staff, including volunteers, fully recognise the contribution they must make to safeguard children in their care, following the principles of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Our primary responsibility is the safeguarding of individual children and any concerns about their emotional or physical well-being must be addressed appropriately. Having responsibility for children during a large part of every day, we are well placed to notice changes in appearance, behaviour and achievement; to confirm their welfare or to raise concerns.

## Rationale

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.

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 Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 states that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in all decisions concerning the child. This is also reflected in Article 3 of the UNCRC– the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration. The 'paramountcy' of the child principle underpins our Child Protection policy and procedures.

## The Safeguarding Team

Chair of Governors: **Mr Brendan Ingram**

Designated Governor for Child Protection Governance: **Mrs Mary Doherty**

Principal: **Mr Damian McGuckian**

Designated Teacher for Child Protection: **Mrs Dolores Davidson**

Deputy Designated Governor for Child Protection: **Mrs Rosemary Devlin**

Nursery Unit: **Mrs Breidge Martin**

## 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 may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them' (ACPC, 2005)

### Neglect

Actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of a child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive:

- Poor hygiene
- Constant hunger
- Inadequate/inappropriate clothing
- Constant tiredness
- Lack of adequate supervision
- Untreated illness
- Lack of peer relationships
- Compulsive stealing

### Physical Abuse

Actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

Possible signs or symptoms of physical abuse include:

- Unexplained bruises (in places difficult to mark)
- Unexplained lacerations, fractures or abrasions
- Untreated injuries
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Fear of going home

## Sexual Abuse

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family roles.

Possible signs or symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- Inappropriate sexualised language or behaviour
- Low self-esteem
- Personality changes
- Fear of going home

## Emotional Abuse

Actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe and persistent adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse. (NIO strategy on Domestic Violence).

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
- Attention seeking
- Wetting and soiling
- Sudden speech disorders
- Low self-esteem

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.

No list of symptoms can be exhaustive. They may give rise to concern but are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred.

## Bullying

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse. Our anti-bullying policy is set out in a separate document and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. 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.

Any complaints by a parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied will be investigated by the Principal and/or Designated Teacher for Child Protection and action will be taken to protect the victim. This may include ensuring that another child or a group of children befriends and supports the child being bullied in the playground. Staff will also monitor the situation on a regular basis. The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but may 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 Dealing with Cases of Suspected or Disclosed Abuse

In line with advice from Child Protection Support Services for Schools (CPSSS), the school will ensure that specific procedures are followed in the event of a member of staff becoming concerned about the abuse of a child. Emphasis will be placed on both early detection and swift intervention, but no member of the school's staff will investigate directly and signs of possible abuse will not be considered by the school as proof.

## Staff Training

All staff have Child Protection training, using materials from CPSSS, which is updated every two years. The members of the Safeguarding Team attend additional training given by CPSSS. This is carried out on a three-year basis.

## Detection/Disclosure

Each teacher will be responsible for setting up appropriate methods by which pupils can access help and support from within school. This may include the use of worry boxes or some other discrete means by which pupils can express concerns in a private manner.

In this way, members of staff may be informed by a child about abuse or become concerned as a result of observation or disclosure. 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 Designated Teacher.

## Referral to Designated Teacher

Staff will act promptly in referring the concern to the Designated Teacher. Together they will discuss the concern and complete a Child Protection Incident Report.

## What to Record

At each stage, the relevant staff member will record as accurate an account of what has occurred in as much factual detail as possible. This will not include any judgemental insight, nor any personal opinion or reflection.

## Action Planning

The Designated Teacher meets with the Principal (or Chairperson of the Board of Governors in the absence of the Principal) and an appropriate course of action is planned. A written record of decisions should be made.

## Action

One or more of the following actions will be effected, as appropriate to the specific concerns:

- The teacher and/or Designated Teacher will talk further with the child in an attempt to reassure him/her and simply to clarify and record what has happened (this will not involve detailed investigation or interpretation and **no promise of confidentiality will be given**).
- The Designated Teacher, in consultation with the Principal, 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, and following advice from CPSSS, the parents will be informed immediately.
- The Designated Teacher may seek clarification or advice and consult with CPSSS-Designated Officer for Child Protection at the NEELB, 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, the Designated Teacher will inform both Social Services & the NEELB Designated Officer for Child Protection. This will be done by email (password –protected) using the official Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) form. The Social Services Gateway Team and/or the Public Protection Unit of the PSNI will be contacted if any suspicion of physical or sexual abuse remains.

- Any abuse that is ultimately confirmed will be followed up with support for the victim and an appropriate combination of discipline and support as advised by the confirming outside agency and agreed by the principal and governors.

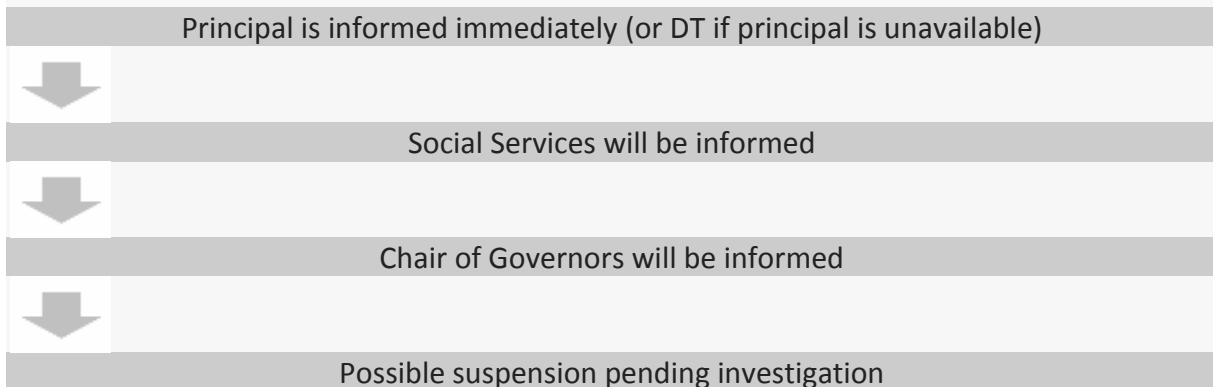
## Child Abuse Complaints Against Staff

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the Designated Teacher if the Principal is unavailable) must be informed immediately. The following procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Designated Teacher or 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 Designated Teacher must be informed immediately. He/she will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and together they will take appropriate advice and ensure the necessary action is taken.

### Child Abuse Complaint Against Staff

Flowchart:



## Role of the Designated Teacher (DT)

The Designated Teacher will:

- Promote a child protection ethos in the school
- Develop and update the school's child protection policy
- Ensure parents have access to a copy of the child protection policy if requested
- Ensure parents receive a summary of the policy every 2 years, including how to access a copy of the full policy (ETI guidelines)
- Provide written reports to the Board of Governors regarding child protection
- Provide training to all school staff including support staff

- Be available to discuss the child protection concerns of any member of staff
- Be responsible for recordkeeping of all child protection concerns & maintain all records in a secure location
- Liaise with parents, when appropriate, over child protection issues
- Liaise with CPSSS
- Make referrals to Social Services or PSNI Public Protection Units
- Co-operate fully with any agency involved with the care of an individual child, compiling information and attending case conferences as required

The Deputy Designated Teacher will support and undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection as required.

## Record Keeping

Detailed written records of all concerns and actions relating to suspicions of abuse will be securely held in a locked facility to which only the designated teacher, deputy designated teacher and principal have access. This will also contain all official correspondence. All notes will be written objectively, without speculation and immediately following any incident that they record.

In accordance with guidance from DENI, governors will receive termly updates on child protection and a formal report annually, which will include the following, with anonymity maintained:

- a report on the school's maintenance of child protection records, e.g. concerns of abuse, any referrals to social services, any complaints against staff
- child protection training
- policy review/update
- safeguarding initiatives

## Staff Conduct (to concur with GTCNI code of practice)

Relationships between children and all staff are developed on trust and mutual respect. The Code of Conduct (ref:DENI 99/10) is known to all staff, teaching and non-teaching, and reflects the safeguarding ethos of the school. It ensures that the recommended child protection procedures are followed with empathy and professionalism (see Appendix B).

## Parents & Child Protection

The Child Protection Policy will remain available to all parents via the school's website and a summary will be distributed every two years. Advice will be given on procedures for reporting child abuse and a synopsis of the policy will be included in the school prospectus.

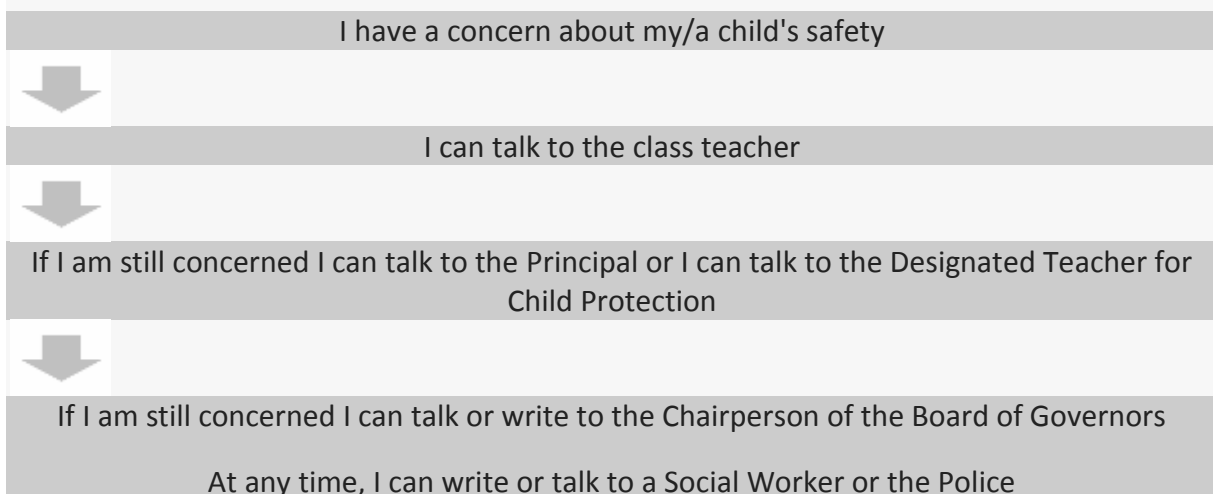
Parents are asked to supply the school with the names of all persons who have permission to collect their child from school (or to confirm that their child may leave the grounds unaccompanied). They are asked to inform the school of any change in this routine.

Parents are asked to brief school about arrangements following any significant changes to daily family life, including separation or divorce. Members of staff need to be aware of legal responsibilities, agreed access or exclusion and any involvement of social services. The next update is scheduled for January 2015, but parents are encouraged to keep the school informed as necessary.

In the event of a parent making a complaint about a member of staff, volunteer or student, the school's complaints procedure should be followed and the complaint addressed directly to the principal. If the complaint is against the principal it should be addressed to the chairman of the governors. If a complaint should include an accusation against another child, the accused child's parents will be informed. Discipline must remain solely in the hands of the staff.

### **How a Parent can raise a Child Protection Concern**

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



### **The Preventative Curriculum**

We recognise that the school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm of our pupils by providing pupils with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as Social Services, Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychology, PSNI, Childline, NSPCC and the school nurse.

As a UNICEF rights respecting school (RRSA), all classes promote the importance of children's rights, highlighting the role of all adult duty bearers and the needs of children are seen as paramount in all our work. The articles of the convention can be seen on display



with our work, relevant policies reference the UNCRC and the specific language of rights is promoted through our daily pastoral care of children.

An awareness of "stranger danger"; an understanding of how to respond to perceived threats; care in regard to e-safety; and the development of standards of behaviour that are appropriate for primary school children, are all reinforced through the school's work on Personal Development and Mutual Understanding within the Northern Ireland Curriculum. They are also the focus of assemblies, health promotion activities, visits from outside professionals and on-going guidance as opportunities for such teaching and learning arise.

In addition to the PDMU area of learning, classes from P4-P7 will also make use of the Helping Hands materials. Teachers throughout Key Stage 2 and the Year 4 teachers have all received training in this programme, offered by DENI through Women's Aid. The discrete materials will be used in class throughout Year 4 and year 5, the messages in the booklets will also be explored further throughout Year 6 and Year 7. This programme will be delivered by the class teacher. As a follow up to this training, the school has been recognised by Women's Aid as a holder of the Bronze Award in 'Safe Place' status. This significant achievement means that the school plays an important community role as our premises acts as a signpost for those who might need specific support.

## Signage

Throughout the school building there is appropriate signage detailing the personnel specifically trained in child protection issues to whom children (and adults) can talk about concerns. There are also signs highlighting the availability of outside agencies to whom children can contact directly to talk about their worries. The importance of these visual messages will be reinforced by each class teacher.

## Health and Safety

Our Health and Safety Policy, along with the Educational Visits policy, reflect the consideration we give to the protection of our children both within the school environment and when away from the school when undertaking school trips and visits, including overnight.

## Intimate Care

As a general principle, members of staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with pupils. It is, however, unrealistic to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies; in particular, a distressed child may need reassurance that involves appropriate physical comforting. Only trained first-aiders are permitted to deal with and treat injuries in private if appropriate. In these circumstances, parents are always informed.

## Toileting Accidents

Every year in school there is always a very small number of toileting accidents. For the comfort and wellbeing of the children, the following procedures will be applied to toileting accidents:

- If a child in P1 has a toilet accident he/she will be helped to change his/her clothes, providing a person with parental responsibility has signed the Intimate Care Form. This form gives permission for P1 staff members to change the child and make him/her comfortable. Parents who do not sign this form will be contacted immediately and asked to come to the school immediately to collect the child and take him/her home to be changed. If any parent cannot be contacted, the people named on the contact list on the Intimate Care Form will be telephoned in the order that their names appear on the list.
- Children from P2-7 will be given a change of clean clothes so that they can make themselves comfortable.
- After any child has been made comfortable after a toileting accident, parents will be contacted and asked to come to the school to collect him/her, so that the child can be showered/washed properly at home.

There may be occasions when substitute staff members are employed in the P1 classrooms. They will be fully informed of our Child Protection Policy and of the Code of Conduct.

## Safe Handling and Use of Reasonable Force

Our policy on physical restraint by staff is set out in accordance with guidelines from NEELB. It acknowledges that staff must only use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person.

## The Internet and Digital Technologies

Our policy on the internet and digital technologies is set out in a separate document and is informed by DE guidance. It acknowledges the opportunities for learning as well as the risks attached to the internet and digital technologies. Specifically it addresses safeguarding issues that may arise in the use of the internet and digital technologies.

## Vetting Procedures

The school's vetting processes for staff; permanent, temporary, part-time, volunteers and trainees are compliant with practice advised in DE circulars 2006/06, 2006/07, 2006/08, 2006/09, and 2008/03. Copies of these circulars are available on the DE website: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)

## Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Governors and updated as necessary, particularly in the light of new advice from DENI, CPSSS, NEELB & CCMS

Appendix A

**PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE IN ST. JOSEPH'S  
PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY UNIT DUNLOY**

Child makes a disclosure to a member of staff or member of staff has concerns about a child either as a result of on observation or many observations over a period of time. Member of staff does not investigate.

**MUST ACT PROMPTLY**

Member of staff refers matter to Mrs Davidson, Mrs Devlin or Mr McGuckian to discuss concerns with the aforementioned.

**MAKES FULL NOTES**

The above-named teachers will meet and agree on a course of action, with all actions being taken after consulting CCMS/NEELB Designated Officers.

**WRITTEN RECORDS WILL BE KEPT**

If there is any doubt about whether to take further action, advice will be sought from:

- ◆ NEELB Designated Officer
- ◆ SOCIAL SERVICES
- ◆ CCMS designated officer

Advice may also be sought from:

Clinical Medical Officer  
School Nurse  
Education Welfare Officer  
Educational Psychologist

Depending on the nature of the concerns, one or more of the following actions may be taken:

- 1) Mrs Davidson and Mrs Devlin meet with the parent/s
- 2) UNOCINI referral may be made to Social Services
- 3) Emergency referral may be made to Social Services and Care Unit.

In the absence of any of the above-named teachers, Mr McGuckian will take the place of whoever is unavailable.

**OTHER ACTION:**

- Record Advice given
- Monitor
- Review

## Appendix B

### **Staff Code of Conduct – Child Protection DENI 1999**

*All actions concerning children must uphold the best interests of the child 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 in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children 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.*

#### **1. Private Meetings with Pupils.**

- a. Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

#### **2. Physical Contact with Pupils.**

- a. As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- b. It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils 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 providing this.
- c. 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.
- d. Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- e. In particular circumstances, such as use of certain areas like the swimming pool, we have our own guidelines – Teachers should stay outside changing rooms and verbally encourage children to change quickly. Teachers should only enter changing rooms in the case of an emergency.
- f. Staff who have to administer first aid to a pupil 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.

- g. Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- h. 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 immediately to the designated teacher or Principal.
- i. Pupils should be particularly careful when supervising 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 pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

### **3. Choice and use of Teaching Materials.**

- a. Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- b. 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. Parents will be advised, prior to sensitive issues being addressed in Health Education or Relationship and Sexuality Education.
- c. If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

### **4. 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.

At all times, members of staff will exercise their professional judgement in matters concerning their conduct in relating to the pupils. At intervals, staff will 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.

### **5. Confidentiality**

Staff should ensure that information regarding pupils is only shared with the appropriate person.

All staff should be aware of the confidential nature of personal information about a child or young person and maintain that confidentiality.

Child Protection information regarding a pupil must be treated on a 'need to know' basis only and information should only be shared with the relevant personnel.

Staff cannot promise confidentiality regarding information which causes concern that a child had been or may be at risk of harm.

## 6. I.C.T.

***In line with the school's I.C.T. policy, the following Code of Safe Practice has been highlighted and agreed to by all staff -***

- No social networking site, outside of Learning NI, should ever be used in school without permission from the Principal.
- Staff should never accept a 'friend request' from a pupil on any social networking site.
- As is normal good practice, staff should not use their mobile phones during teaching time, unless in an emergency and with permission from the Principal.
- Pupils accessing the Internet should be supervised by an adult at all times.
- Staff should ensure that all pupils are aware of the rules for the safe and effective use of the Internet. These are displayed in classrooms and discussed with pupils.
- Staff should ensure that all pupils using the Internet have written permission from their parents.
- Recommended websites for each year group are available under Favourites. Any additional websites used by pupils should be checked beforehand by teachers, as far as is possible, to ensure that there is no unsuitable content and that material is age-appropriate.
- Deliberate/accidental access to inappropriate materials or any other breaches of the school code of practice should be reported immediately to the Principal/U.I.C.T. Co-ordinator.
- In the interests of system security, staff passwords should only be shared with the network manager.
- Teachers are aware that the C2K system tracks all Internet use and records the sites visited. The system also logs emails and messages sent and received by individual users.
- Teachers should be aware of copyright and intellectual property rights and should be careful not to download or use any materials which are in breach of these.
- Photographs of pupils should only be taken with a school camera and images stored on a centralised area on the school network. An external Hard Drive is used as a 'back up' of all folders. Consequently, staff should never take a photograph of a child with their mobile phone or store any images or data regarding any child on any personal laptop etc.
- School systems may not be used for any unauthorised commercial transactions i.e. permission must be sought from the Principal