




# **Safeguarding Policy**

**Reviewed May 2017**



			
<b>POLICY</b>	<b>Safeguarding, Child Protection and Wellbeing</b>		
<b>EFFECTIVE FROM</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	<b>REVIEW DATE</b>	May 2018
<b>APPENDICES</b>	Safeguarding Report (Blank) Incident Report (Blank) Safeguarding and CP Protocol		
<b>POLICY WRITTEN BY</b>	Mr. Peter Wilmont DT Child Protection		
<b>DATE OF APPROVAL BY BOARD OF GOVERNORS</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2017		

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## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OVERVIEW**

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The School's Child Protection Policy is an integral part of our Pastoral Care provision and is one of a number of policies within the area of pastoral care. This policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the School. The welfare and protection of pupils in our care is of paramount consideration.

When abuse is suspected, or when a pupil makes an allegation of abuse, the School has a statutory obligation, under the Children (NI) Order 1995 to initiate an investigation which may result in a referral either to the local Health and Social Services Trust, to the Police, or to other agencies as the need arises. Cedar Lodge undertakes to comply with the advice on matters related to child protection offered by DENI.

The School undertakes to comply with the recommended vetting procedures for adults working with pupils within the school (See vetting and recruitment procedures).

For the benefit of pupils who may not find it comfortable to talk to a teacher about abuse, the School will promote and advertise contact details of appropriate Children's Organisations.

It is recognised that all staff play an important role in identifying potential cases of child abuse. It is also important that all relevant agencies involved in child abuse co-operate for the benefit of the child. All schools have a **DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CHILD PROTECTION**, who liaises with Social Service departments and with staff in school. For this procedure to work, it relies on the skills and expertise of every member of staff or volunteer within school to recognise or report concerns.

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## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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At Cedar Lodge, **MR PETER WILMONT** is the **DESIGNATED TEACHER** for child protection. **MR CHRIS MURPHY** also knows the procedures and is the **DEPUTY DESIGNATED TEACHER** in case of Mr Wilmont's absence. All staff have total commitment to child protection. They raise children's awareness about themselves through Personal and Social Education, Health Education, and develop a trusting climate so that children feel able to talk and share their thoughts and feelings.

Cedar Lodge has a policy of partnership between home and school, but with child abuse, or suspicion of child abuse, our first and only responsibility is to the child. This may mean that parents are not informed or consulted in some instances. We may not be able to prevent child abuse, but by following child protection procedures, we are trying our best to protect all our children and this is our first and only responsibility.

All staff in Cedar Lodge make sure, through their care of children, to try to ensure that children keep safe, remain healthy and are able to say "NO". Suspected cases are reported, procedures adhered to and subsequent actions are left to the appropriate agencies. We also care for children who have been abused and understand their problems.

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## AIMS

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By following child protection procedures we:

- Care for the child
- Care for our school
- Care for the community we serve
- Respond to the guidelines and procedures of other agencies.

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## GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

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Any allegation by a child that they are suffering or has suffered abuse should and will be treated seriously. When a child volunteers such information, the chief task at this stage is to listen to the child and make a note of the discussion to pass on to the designated teacher.

When members of staff see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek clarification from the child, with tact and understanding. It is not the responsibility of staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected child abuse.

Any comment by the child or subsequently by a parent or carer or other adult about how an injury occurred, should be written down, as soon as possible afterwards, quoting words actually used. Records made by a member of staff must be objective, factual and detailed; these records will be submitted to the DESIGNATED TEACHER. Staff should also be aware that their notes may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings.

Staff should not give the child or young person undertakings of confidentiality, although they can, and should, reassure them that information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know.

Please note the following:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Confidentiality is subordinate to the need to protect the child
- If in doubt, report suspicions as outlined in the reporting structure attached to this policy.
- Staff are asked only to report suspicions, not to investigate or make a diagnosis
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In reporting concern or suspicion, all staff in school must follow the following procedures. The designated teacher, principal, or vice principal will then follow the EA Child Protection Procedures.

### ***Reasons for following procedures***

- It protects the child to the best of our ability.
- It avoids delay
- It provides consistency
- It protects all staff
- It ensures that, if further action is taken by another agency, then the school has followed the protection procedures.

Staff are in contact with children all day and are in a position to detect possible abuse. They must not think that by voicing concern they are necessarily starting procedures. The criteria

should be that they have *'reasonable suspicion'* and under the Children Act, 1989, this definition has been extended to include *'or may suffer in future'*.

Care must be taken in asking questions about indications of abuse. Staff should remember the following points:

- They should not ask leading questions
- They should not ask questions which encourage the child to change his or her version of events
- The chief task at this stage is to listen
- Any comment by the child or an adult or carer should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, preferably quoting words actually used
- Staff must not give the child any undertaking of confidentiality
- Staff should also be aware that their notes may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings.

If a child discloses abuse or, staff are suspicious, there are three things to do:

- Report immediately to Mr Peter Wilmont as Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Deputy Designated Teacher Mr Chris Murphy if he is not available. If neither are available seek advice from Mrs Lois Little, Principal, who is also a member of the School Safeguarding Team.
- Do not speak to the parents
- Do not promise the child that it will be kept a secret.

It is very important in these cases that prompt and correct procedures are followed under EA Child Protection Procedures. The reporting staff member will be told of any further action taken i.e. Social Service referral, monitor, PSNI etc. If the reported case is taken up and investigated by an external agency, then any meetings, case conferences or action taken will be followed through and the teacher concerned informed.

Staff have an important role in hearing what children have to say. The school can provide a neutral place where the child feels it is safe to talk. Sensitivity to the disclosure is vital. Staff must listen carefully to what the child is saying, treat it seriously, and value what they say.

Children may feel they will not be believed, or that they will be punished. Staff will need to say that whatever has happened it is not their fault. Fear of the consequences of telling is very common. It can be very tempting to offer a promise of confidentiality to the child. This is not realistic. The child needs to hear the truth about what will happen together with a commitment to support the child. It is crucial not to ask leading questions. Our role is to enable the child to speak and then know what to do next.

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### **CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING RECORDS**

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All safeguarding records will be maintained and managed by the Designated Teacher. This can include the following but is not an exhaustive list:

- Safeguarding Reports
- Records of ongoing concerns
- Archived Records
- Case Conference Reports and Minutes
- Incident Reports

This includes all children, who, for whatever reason need to be monitored. Staff are kept informed of any child in their class who is on this register. Teachers must inform the Principal of any changes/additions so that this list can be kept up to date.

In the unlikely event of Mr Wilmont, Mr Murphy or the principal Mrs Little not being available to deal with an emergency involving Child Protection issues, then the teacher must speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Team, who will deal with the matter.

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### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE**

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School staff are particularly well placed to observe symptoms of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. No list of symptoms can be exhaustive. However, the following are a number of possible indicators of abuse.

- Evidence of physical abuse may include evidence of slapping, black eyes, gripping bruises, burn marks, bite marks which may be apparent, particularly when pupils are changing for sports activities.
- Possible indicators of physical neglect such as inadequate clothing, poor hygiene, deficient nutrition, tiredness, listlessness, lack of social relationships, loss of self-esteem, running away from home.
- Emotional abuse may include an excessive dependence or attention seeking, loss of self-esteem, excessive affection, poor peer relationships, fear of new situations, reluctance for parent liaison, signs of mutilation.
- Sexual abuse may exhibit physical signs or lead to a substantial behaviour change including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Such symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes, medical or social, such as bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances or drug, alcohol or solvent misuse (See drugs policy).

Signs, such as those described above, and others, can do no more than give rise to concern – they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. It may, however indicate that investigation should take place particularly if they appear in combination or are regularly repeated.

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### **NATURE AND CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE**

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The Children (NI) Order 1995 reinforces the statutory obligation on the education sector to play its part in the reporting and prevention of child abuse. (For further details see the Children (NI) Order 1995 and DENI Circular 1999/10).

#### **Categories of Child Abuse**

“Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger, who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both”.

The abuse may take a number of forms, including:

#### **Physical Abuse**

Physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

### **Sexual Abuse**

The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend, and to which they are unable to give informed consent; or they violate the social taboos of family roles.

### **Neglect**

The persistent or severe neglect of a child (for example by exposure to any kind of danger including cold or starvation) which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

### **Emotional Abuse**

The severe adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment; this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse

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## **EA CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

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These procedures are to be followed in reported abuse cases or suspicion of abuse. Copies of the procedure are held by Mr. Wilmont and Mr Murphy.

### **Role of individual members of staff**

If a member of staff has a concern or a pupil has made a disclosure then they must follow the procedure as outlined in the attached document **REPORTING PROCEDURES**. If a report is required the following needs to be recorded:

- What they have observed
- When they observed it
- What the child said (in the child's own words, as far as possible).

It is **NOT** the responsibility of staff to undertake investigation or to make enquiries of Parents/Carers about possible abuse.

### **Role of Designated Teacher**

It is the role of the Designated Teacher(s) to:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the procedures and internal school arrangements
- Coordinate action by staff in cases of suspected child abuse and to report to the appropriate agencies.
- Ensure that staff are aware of children in care or on the Child Protection Register
- Keep adequate records

### **Role of External Agencies**

When a report is made to the Designated Teacher, advice is sought from a professional body, and referral made in accordance with DENI 1997/ paragraph 30. Referral may involve some of the following agencies: Social Services, EA, PSNI and the pupil's GP. The Social Services will:

- Talk to the Designated Teacher
- Decide how the case should proceed
- Investigate and assess the degree of risk
- Organise, if appropriate, a case conference
- Invite a representative from the School to attend
- Inform Parents/Carers and the School of the Child Protection plan when agreed.

The Child Protection Register is held with Mr. Wilmont. This contains information about confirmed and suspected cases of child abuse.

Sexual abuse cases are investigated by the Police. Social Services can be present to assist the Police when interviewing a child.

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#### **ADVICE AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF**

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The School must safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in its charge; therefore the conduct of School Staff towards our pupils must be above reproach. The following advice is designed to reduce the risk of false allegations being made against any member of staff:

- Staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.
- Staff must be aware of the dangers which arise from private interviews with individual pupils. There are occasions when confidential interviews must take place, but such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access or with the door open or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people.
- It is inadvisable to spend time with one pupil, away from other people.
- Staff need to be aware of the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with pupils, and must bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued. On rare occasions, a teacher might have to restrain a pupil physically, to prevent him/her causing injury to themselves, others or to property. In such circumstances, no more than the minimum necessary force should be used. See Reasonable Force Policy for further information.
- Members of staff should be aware that persistent sarcasm, verbal bullying or severe and persistent negative comments or actions constitute emotional abuse and are therefore encouraged to reflect on any aspect of their interactions with children which may give rise to perceptions or allegations of this form of abuse.
- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising children in a residential setting such as a ski-trip, outdoor education camp or an extended visit away from home, where relationships tend to be less formal and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment. (See Environmental Trips and Outings Policy).
- Following any incident where a teacher feels that his/her actions have been or may be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal. This would apply especially in a case where a teacher had been obliged to restrain a child physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or self injury (See reasonable force policy).
- If any allegations are made against a member of staff, details must be recorded and reported to the Designated Teacher/DDT/Principal immediately.
- If a colleague is suspected of inappropriate behaviour or abuse, it is essential that this is reported to the Designated Teacher/Principal immediately.
- During the course of the school year, the use of photographic imagery of pupils including digital, photographic and video are used for school records, for displays around the school, for the school news sheet, prospectus, web site and approved Social Media outlets. In accordance with UN convention on the Rights of the Child it is necessary to inform Parents/Carers of this practice and seek



their consent. Images of any pupil or staff member in the school must be submitted for approval by Mr Mruphy or Mrs Little.

- Parents/Carers consent should be obtained before any photograph of a child under the age of 18 is passed on to an outside agency.
- Mobile phones with inbuilt cameras are not allowed in school.

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#### **CONFIDENTIALITY – CONSIDERATIONS TO BEAR IN MIND**

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- Precautions should be taken to ensure that information is given to the appropriate person.
- All personnel working within the School should be aware of the confidential nature of personal information about a child or young person and the importance of maintaining that confidentiality.
- Personal information about a child's family should be regarded as confidential material.
- Any disclosure by a child or young person should be led at their pace, without pressure for detail from the adult.
- If abuse is suspected, information should be given only to the strictly relevant person, such as the Designated Teacher or in their absence, the Deputy Designated teacher.
- Other members of staff or volunteers 'need to know' only enough to prepare them to act with sensitivity to a distressed child or young person. They do not need to know the details.
- The person to whom the disclosure is made may need to decide on some person from whom they might need support. This can be done without divulging details about the child or young person and even without naming them.
- The child or young person, depending on their age and level of understanding, should be kept informed of who knows, and what they know, at all stages of the procedures.
- If the child is 'looked after' such as a foster home or children's home, all staff and volunteers closely involved with him/her should know about their circumstances as it may affect practical matters such as who collects them from the School, permission to go on outings or residentials, who is contactable in an emergency. Nevertheless, few children want to talk openly with adults or other children about their changed circumstances, so there is a need for sensitivity and discretion in handling such matters.
- Older children's feelings particularly should be taken into account and respected if possible. They may prefer adults not to know about traumatic events in their lives.
- Staff may pick up worrying information about children and young people from other parents/guardians, children young people and neighbours. This should be passed on to the Designated Teacher and may be recorded in 'working notes'.
- Where abuse has been disclosed or discovered, it is likely that many people will know something about it. Gossip and speculation within the School or local community may adversely contribute to the situation. Infringements of confidentiality will be dealt with firmly.