

Rationale

All children have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect, therefore child protection is the responsibility of everyone. The shared responsibilities of Education & Families and other agency employees are to protect children from abuse and exploitation, to respond appropriately when abuse is identified and to ensure whenever possible that all children are able to exercise their right to be raised in a warm, stimulating and safe environment with the support of staff, their families and carers. We recognise that physical and emotional safety provides a foundation for wellbeing and healthy development. It is the clear responsibility of all those involved in our school to adopt good practice throughout their work. This policy is based on the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 – updated 2023, it takes into account the Scottish approach to child protection being based upon children's rights as detailed in the UNCRC and GIRFEC.

(Further information and resources are available on CP Teams within Glow – joining code available from a member of SLT).

Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide advice and guidelines for staff in relation to issues of child protection and the health and wellbeing of the children in our school.

The main purposes of the policy are:

- To raise staff awareness of the categories of abuse and the indicators which could signify that abuse is taking place
- To identify the roles and responsibilities in the care and protection of our pupils
- To provide guidance and support to staff in carrying out their role and responsibilities in the protection of our pupils.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the wider responsibility to promote children's welfare, prevent harm and create a safe culture in which children are listened to, respected and protected. Child protection is part of safeguarding and refers to the action taken when there is concern that a child may be experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse, neglect, exploitation or significant harm.

In line with North Lanarkshire Council child protection arrangements and national guidance, St Ignatius' Primary School & Nursery Class will maintain a safeguarding culture in which the best interests, rights, safety and wellbeing of the child are paramount. Safeguarding applies to all staff, supply staff, students, volunteers, visitors, contractors and partners working with children.

Our safeguarding practice includes:

- safer recruitment and appropriate pre-employment checks, including PVG/Disclosure requirements where applicable;
- clear standards of professional conduct, appropriate boundaries and safe working practice;
- induction and regular safeguarding/child protection learning for staff and relevant volunteers;
- appropriate supervision of children, visitors and volunteers, including during transitions, trips and activities;
- safe use of digital technology, photography, communication and online platforms, with concerns about online harm treated as safeguarding concerns;
- listening to children and taking account of their views, communication needs, rights and individual circumstances;
- prompt action where attendance, unexplained absence, changes in presentation or other patterns indicate a possible welfare or protection concern;

- secure, accurate and proportionate recording and sharing information on a need-to-know basis, in accordance with NLC procedures and data protection requirements;
- reporting concerns about the conduct of an adult in a position of trust, including low-level or boundary concerns, to the Head of Establishment/Child Protection Coordinator without delay; and
- a culture in which staff can raise safeguarding concerns or use whistleblowing arrangements where they believe unsafe practice, misconduct or a failure to act may place a child at risk.

Safeguarding concerns about adults / persons in a position of trust

Any concern, allegation or information suggesting that a member of staff, volunteer, contractor, student, visitor or other adult working with children may have harmed a child, behaved in a way that may indicate they are unsuitable to work with children, breached professional boundaries, or failed to safeguard a child must be reported immediately to the Head of Establishment. Concerns about the Head of Establishment must be escalated through the appropriate North Lanarkshire Council management route. Staff must not investigate the matter themselves or discuss it more widely than is necessary for reporting and safeguarding. Where there is an immediate risk of harm, action to secure the child's safety takes priority. If a child is in immediate danger, Police Scotland should be contacted on 999. Child protection concerns must be progressed without delay in accordance with current North Lanarkshire Council procedures.

Information sharing, confidentiality and recording

Safeguarding information must be handled sensitively and shared only with those who need it to protect or support the child. A promise of secrecy must never be given. Records must distinguish fact, observation, the child's own words and professional opinion; be dated and signed; and be stored securely in accordance with North Lanarkshire Council procedures. The child and family should be involved and informed where appropriate, unless doing so may increase risk, prejudice an investigation or otherwise be contrary to the child's best interests.

Procedures

- All staff are issued with a copy of the Child Protection Action Guidance Leaflet and receive an annual Child Protection update during August in-service days. A copy is also displayed on the staff noticeboard
- In addition, new staff are also required to complete the 'Understanding Child Protection Self Learning Pack' and have this signed off by the Head Teacher
- The procedures outlined in this policy must be followed meticulously at all times and by all staff and should be implemented in conjunction [with NLC Child and Adult Protection Procedures and Guidance](#).

• Partners and those working within the school over extended times (such as parent helpers who volunteer on a regular/weekly basis) will also be made fully aware of child protection procedures within the school and will sign to say that this is the case.

What is child abuse and neglect?

The Scottish Government's National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (refreshed in 2021) states that abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be maltreated at home; within a family or peer network; in care placements; institutions or

community settings; and in the online and digital environment. Those responsible may be previously unknown or familiar, or in positions of trust. They may be family members. Children may be harmed pre-birth, for instance by domestic abuse of a mother or through parent alcohol and drug use.

This policy provides the following definitions of some of the ways in which children may experience abuse.

- **Physical abuse** – may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating; it may also be caused when a parent/carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after. There may be some variation in family, community or cultural parenting, eg: in relation to reasonable discipline. Cultural sensitivity must not deflect practitioners from a focus on a child's essential needs for care and protection from harm, or a focus on the need of a family for support to reduce stress and associated risk.

- **Emotional abuse** – persistent emotional ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all types of ill treatment of a child but can occur independently of other forms of abuse. It can include:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person;
- Exploitation or corruption of a child, or imposition of demands inappropriate for their age or stage of development;
- Repeated silencing, ridiculing or intimidation;
- Demands that so exceed a child's capability that they may be harmful;
- Extreme overprotection, such that a child is harmed by prevention of learning, exploration and social development;
- Seeing or hearing the abuse of another.

- **Sexual abuse** – involves a child under 16 years of age in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. It may involve physical contact, but which also applies to non-contact sexual activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of indecent images. It includes using sexual language to a child or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **FGM (Female Genital Mutilation)** – An extreme form of physical, sexual and emotional abuse upon girls and women, involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Such procedures are usually conducted on children and are a criminal offence in Scotland. FGM can be fatal and is associated with long-term physical and emotional harm. The key risk factor is whether the mother of a girl has had FGM. The girl should be of increased risk if:

- An older sister has had FGM
- Parents express views that they value the practice
- The family have recently arrived in the UK from a country where the practice is prevalent
- A visit abroad is planned and the girl has mentioned a 'special ceremony'.

• **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** – a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a person under 18 years old into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. CSE does not always involve physical contact. It can also occur through the use of technology. Children who are trafficked across borders or within the UK may be at particular risk of sexual abuse.

• **Neglect** – may involve a parent or carer failing to provide for a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development; failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger; and not ensuring access to appropriate medical care or treatment. Neglect also incorporates 'non-organic failure to thrive' where a child has significantly failed to meet their normal development and growth milestones and there are no known genetic or medical reasons for this. There can also be single instances of neglectful behaviour that causes significant harm. Neglect can arise in the context of systemic stresses such as poverty, and is an indicator of both support and protection needs.

Indicators of Risk

The following circumstances are considered to be indicators that a child may be at increased risk of harm within their families, however this list is not exhaustive:

- Domestic abuse
- Parental problematic alcohol and drug misuse
- Non-engaging families
- Children and young people experiencing or affected by mental health problems
- Children and young people who display harmful or problematic sexual behaviour
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) This comprises of all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
- Honour based violence and forced marriage
- Fabricated or induced illness (previously known as Munchausen by proxy)
- Sudden unexpected death in infants and children
- Harm outside the home including (but not exclusively) ritual abuse, child trafficking, internet abuse.

UK Government Counter Terrorism Awareness

Contest is the overarching UK Government Counter Terrorism Strategy. It contains four work streams known as the 4 P's i.e. Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare.

PREVENT is the strategy published in 2011 as part of Contest.

Key risk factors to be taken into account are

- Ideologies. Is the child using language/engaged in activities to suggest they are at risk from being involved or drawn into any type of radicalisation.

Revised HM Government Guidance (2021) is available for Scotland ([Prevent Multi-Agency Panel Duty Guidance: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism](#))

The above guidance also provides information about ways in which children and young people can come to harm outside of the home and in specific circumstances

e.g.

- Child trafficking
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Online and mobile phone safety

Roles and Responsibilities

In St Ignatius' Primary School and Nursery Class, the Head of Establishment has overall responsibility for all child protection issues. These responsibilities include the following:

- Ensuring that the North Lanarkshire Child and Adult Protection Procedures and Guidance are brought to the attention of all staff on an annual basis, that staff have access to the guidance and are issued with the Child Protection Action Guidance Leaflet and that a copy of the leaflet is displayed on the staff room wall and in all classes
- Ensuring that all staff know the name of the child protection coordinator in the establishment and who to speak to in his/her absence – this is also displayed around the school, within the School Handbook and highlighted in Newsletters
- Developing establishment policy and practice to meet national and local authority guidance
- Ensuring child protection training for all staff
- Developing a school ethos and learning opportunities which promote the safety and wellbeing of all children
 - Completing and returning all Child Protection paperwork as outlined in local guidance.
- Ensuring safeguarding arrangements extend beyond responding to disclosures and include safer recruitment, staff conduct and professional boundaries, management of allegations/concerns about adults, online safety, visitors/volunteers, information sharing and whistleblowing.
- Ensuring safeguarding and child protection procedures are reviewed following significant national or local guidance changes and communicated to staff.

All Staff

It is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe therefore all school staff, including visiting staff, supply staff and partners, have an active role to play within this establishment.

In terms of child protection, staff should be aware of the following grounds for concern, which can arise from a wide range of circumstances but will generally be covered by the following events:

All staff must maintain professional curiosity, act on concerns at the earliest opportunity, follow the staff code of conduct and professional boundaries, and report concerns about another adult's practice or behaviour through the appropriate safeguarding route. Safeguarding concerns must never be dismissed because they appear minor in isolation; patterns and cumulative concerns may be significant.

Grounds for Concern:

- A child states that abuse has taken place or the child feels unsafe
- Disclosure of information
- Notice of bruising/marks which are a concern
- A third party or anonymous allegation is received
- A child's appearance, behaviour, play, drawing or statement cause suspicion of abuse
- Concerns about behaviour or neglect
- A child reports an incident of abuse which occurred some time ago
- Staff witness abuse
- Suspect a child/young person has been abused or harmed

Responding to Grounds for Concern:

- Any grounds for concern should be reported immediately to the head of establishment.
- If there is direct evidence or suspicion of child abuse the matter must be reported immediately, staff should not wait to gather evidence nor agree to keep the information secret or discuss the matter with others
- Staff must follow the guidance given by the head of establishment in relation to recording concerns, supporting the child, co-operating with subsequent actions to investigate the grounds for concern, and protecting the child or children concerned
- All information recording must be relevant, accurate, signed and dated as it may become a legal document. Please ensure the child's name and date of birth is accurately recorded. The information should include a clear, succinct chronology of events, all relevant factual information and a summary of the employee response and any agreements reached.
- Staff should provide an accurate report for the child protection co-ordinator when requested
- It is essential that there is no delay in initiating child protection procedures even where the head of establishment is absent or not available. In such circumstances staff should speak to the nominated PT. Further support is available from the Child Protection Development Officer – Lindsey Mitchell Mitchelli@northlan.gov.uk.

Supporting the Child

During any disclosure of abuse by a child staff should respond in a sensitive and supportive manner. The following strategies should be adopted:

- listen with care
- treat the allegation in a serious manner
- reassure the child that he or she is right to tell
- affirm the child's feelings as expressed by the child
- keep your own feelings in check
- do not give a guarantee of confidentiality or secrecy
- do not ask leading questions, investigate or gather evidence
- ask open ended questions which seek to clarify information already given
- do not interrogate the child
- do not show disbelief
- do not be judgmental
- do not introduce personal or third party experiences of abuse
- do not display strong emotions
- support the child and explain what you are going to do next, reassure them
- write down what the child says as soon as possible – and in their own words

- if a child needs medical attention as a result of abuse SEEK THIS AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

Summary of Action in Response to Grounds for Concern

- Report immediately to the HT/PT. If neither is available contact social work directly then inform NLC for support. Do not wait on HT/PT returning to school.
 - Support the child appropriately (as above)
 - Record on the same day – clearly, accurately, in sequence – date and sign the file (record on Pastoral Notes)
 - Monitor significant changes, events and decisions
 - Keep record keeping up to date. Relevant, clear, succinct and confidential.
- (This may be undertaken by HT/PT)

What happens next?

A medical emergency should be reported immediately to medical services and, if required, first aid should be administered before reporting the incident to the senior social worker.

Child abuse is a criminal offence. Urgent circumstances may require help from the police, for example to immediately avoid further abuse, to ensure the immediate pursuit of an alleged abuser or to avoid destruction of evidence.

The grounds for concern and action taken should be recorded, signed and dated (on the same day) using Appendix 2 Notification of Concern (NOC). Two copies should be sent immediately as indicated on the form. The copy retained in the establishment should be stored in the confidential child file (located in the Head Teacher office). Grounds for concern to be recorded on Seemis pastoral notes.

Following a Notification of Concern (NOC) the police will investigate and may initiate an 'Initial Referral Discussion' (IRD) through a teleconference/MS Teams call. The purpose of the IRD is to ensure that key agencies/services are involved in the initial sharing and analysing of information to inform a collective decision about whether a notification of child protection concern should proceed to a child protection investigation. This ensures a collective responsibility and consistent involvement by police, social work, health and education staff in sharing information and assessing risks and a single record of joint decision making.

Co-operating with Agencies involved in Child Protection Process

Following reporting and recording of concerns staff should cooperate fully with subsequent investigations and support plans as directed by the head of establishment and in consultation with the appropriate agency representatives. This may include attendance at case discussions, child protection conferences and reviews.

Dealing with child protection issues can have stressful consequences for employees. Education & Families have a duty of care to all employees. Support can be accessed through the Staff Welfare Officer.

Conclusion

All children have the right to be cared for and protected from abuse and harm in a safe environment in which their rights are respected. By being aware of and following the procedures in this policy and by referring to local and national guidance we can remain vigilant in protecting our pupils and promoting their Health and Wellbeing.

Useful Resources which can all be found within the Child Protection Team within Glow (joining code available from a member of SLT).

Current NLC Child and Adult Protection Procedures and Guidance (as issued by North Lanarkshire Council)
Action Guidance Leaflet
Understanding Child Protection Self Learning Pack 2021
National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 – updated 2023
IRD Guidance

North Lanarkshire Council Child Protection information and professional resources

North Lanarkshire Council / establishment Staff Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing and Safer Recruitment procedures (current versions)

Relevant NLC guidance on online safety, managing concerns/allegations about adults and information sharing (current versions)