

Carrickfergus College  
Child Protection Policy June 2009

We in Carrickfergus College recognise our primary responsibility for the welfare, care and safety of pupils in our charge. We aim to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential, and where they feel valued for their unique talents and abilities

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone 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 problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school. Because of their day to day contact with individual children, school staff - especially teachers, but also non-teaching staff, including lunchtime supervisors and ancillary or auxiliary staff - are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms of abnormality, or change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. We must also be aware that such symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes and not necessarily abuse.

The principles which underpin our work are set out in the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child 1991 and the Children (NI) Order 1995:

- The welfare of the child is paramount. Where a child has special needs or is disabled, these needs must be taken into consideration
- It is the child's right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously and to be consulted according to his/her age and understanding about proposed action
- The right to confidentiality must be respected and will only be shared in the interests of the child's welfare
- Actions taken to protect a child should not in themselves be abusive by causing the child unnecessary harm or distress.

### **Categories of Child Abuse and possible indicators**

#### **Neglect**

The 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 care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development.

*Possible indicators of neglect might include: evidence of inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparently deficient nutrition, poor academic attainment, poor attendance, poor peer group relationships but seeking attention from adults.*

#### **Physical**

Physical injury to the child, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

*Possible indicators may include evidence of bruises, particularly those of a regular shape which may indicate the use of an implement or strap, the mark of a hand, lacerations, bite marks or burns. Where the explanation is not consistent with the injury or where there are changes of explanation or no explanation, concern may be raised.*

#### **Sexual**

The sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification; the involvement of children in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles.

*Possible indicators may include withdrawn or overtly compliant behaviour, depression and suicidal behaviour, self-mutilation, running away, school refusal, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, art work or drawings which are sexually explicit, pregnancy. At any time of a sudden change in normal behaviour patterns may be an indicator. It should be remembered that for many children these symptoms are present and are not always associated with abuse.*

## **Emotional**

Persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects of the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. An emotionally abused child may be subjected to constant criticism and scape-goating, the continuous withholding of approval and affection, severe discipline or a total lack of appropriate control. Alternatively the child may be exploited to fulfil the parent's emotional needs.

*Possible indicators may include an impaired ability for enjoyment and play and have a low self-esteem and feeling of worthlessness.*

## **Bullying**

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in school. All 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. Pastoral staff will not hesitate to contact parents of victim and bully should it be necessary.

There is a separate policy on the issue of bullying and information on the use of images for school related activities.

## **Procedures for reporting suspected (or) disclosed abuse**

The Board of Governors for Carrickfergus College ensures that the College follows the Code of Practice (DENI 1999/10) for the conduct of all members of staff towards the children and young people attending the College. The Code of Practice covers all activities organised in and by Carrickfergus College, whether on the school premises or elsewhere. The school retains the 'duty of care' no matter where.

Child abuse will not be ignored by any of our staff and it is recognised that some forms of abuse can amount to criminal charges.

*The Designated Teacher (DT) for Child Protection is Mrs E Edwards.*

*Deputy Designated Teachers (DDT) are Mr W Borland, Mr D Campbell.*

If a pupil makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise for concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, the member of staff must act promptly. Adhere to the following basic principles where a disclosure is made to you:

- *Listen to the pupil rather than question him/her. Discreet preliminary clarification (DPC)*
- *Reassure but don't make promises*
- *Never stop a pupil who is freely recalling significant events, don't over react, explain what you have to do and who you have to tell*
- *Make a note of the discussion, taking care to record timing, setting and personnel present, as well as what was said, even if it is information you don't fully understand or like writing down. Written records should reflect the 'words' and 'description' used by the pupil*
- *Refer the details immediately to the DT.*

## **NO PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY CAN OR SHOULD EVER BE GIVEN WHERE ABUSE IS ALLEGED**

Staff should not question or investigate, only listen and refer appropriately.

The DT and the Principal will determine on a 'need to know' basis, those who need to be kept informed in order to help monitor a child's progress. If there are concerns that a child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral to Social services. Unless there are concerns that a parent/guardian may be the abuser the parent/guardian will be informed at the earliest opportunity.

The Principal or DT may need to seek clarification or advice with the NEELB 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. The safety of our pupils is paramount.

When a referral is made to Social Services the Designated Officer of the Education and Library Board is informed.

## **Allegations against a Member of Staff**

In such cases the Principal must be informed immediately. If the Principal is not available the DT must be informed immediately. The Principal will seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint, or giving the information, or from others who may have relevant information.

Having satisfied himself that a complaint has been made the Principal will:

- Inform the DT who will initiate the record of the allegation
- Consult as a matter of urgency with the NEELB Designated officer to form an initial assessment as to whether or not there is sufficient substance in the allegation to warrant further action. It is important to note that whilst the need to protect children is paramount, there is also a need to protect staff against unfounded, potentially damaging allegations
- Consult the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

## **Allegations against the Principal**

If a complaint is made against the Principal, The DT or his/her deputy must be informed immediately. He/she will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the above procedures will be followed.

## **Allegations against the Designated Teacher**

Any allegations must be referred to the Principal who will take appropriate action.

## **Third party Allegations**

When a third party allegation is made to a professional, that professional should endeavour to obtain the following information:

- The name, age and address of the child allegedly abused
- Details of the child's family
- What is alleged and what has been seen by the informant
- Date and time of the occurrence
- Identity of alleged abuser
- The informant should be told that all details will be passed to Social Services
- The name of the informant need not necessarily be passed to Health and Social services Trust or NSPCC, although it is desirable to obtain permission to do so when possible.

## **Staff – Code of Conduct**

This code exists to protect both staff and pupils. The Code will give guidance to all staff, encouraging a consistent approach in the management of their dealings with pupils.

All schools are aware that they must safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils in their charge. This duty rests with all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching and implicit in it is the assumption that the conduct of school staff towards pupils is above reproach.

### **Private meetings with pupils:**

- If a confidential meeting must take place, it should be in a room with visual access
- Alternatively it should take place in a room with the door open or an area which is likely to be frequented with people
- Where possible, another adult or pupil should be present or nearby during the interview
- Members of staff should not give pupils lifts home if at all possible.

### **Physical Contact with Pupils:**

- As a general principle staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with pupils
- Physical contact which may be misconstrued by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided
- There may be times when a distressed child needs re-assurance that may include physical comforting such as a parent would give. Teachers should use their discretion in such cases
- In the course of a teaching day there may be physical contact, for example showing a pupil how to use a piece of equipment. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misconstrued.

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

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

### **Relationships and Attitudes**

- Relationships with pupils should be appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils
- Attitudes, demeanour and language all need thought and care, particularly when teachers of either sex are dealing with adolescent girls and boys.

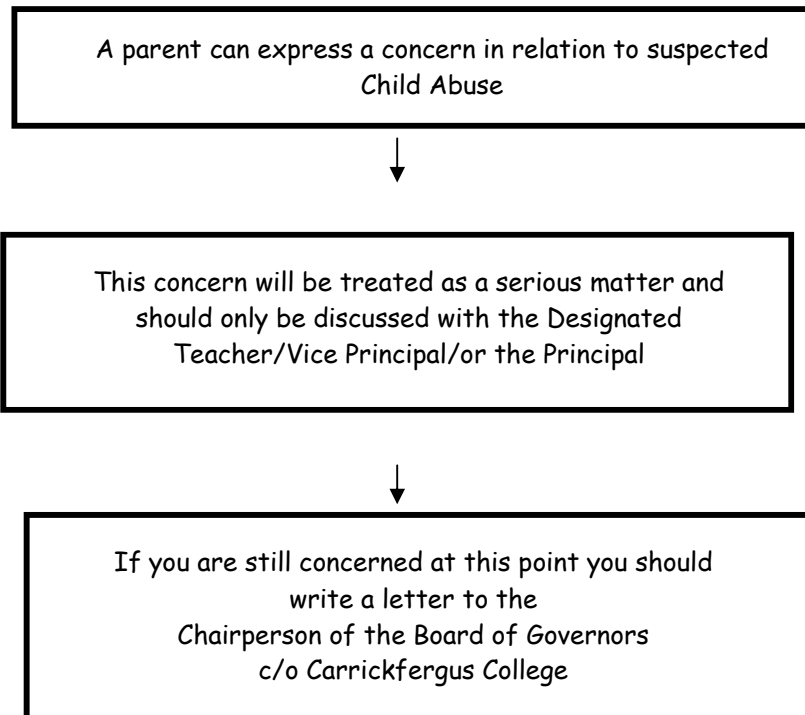
### **Security Procedures**

- All staff will/have been appointed on NEELB guidelines
- All staff employed in the school are subject to a vetting procedure by ACCESS NI
- Guidelines are provided for volunteers who are not in the school on a regular basis and a copy of the 'Child Protection leaflet for Volunteers.
- Any visitors to the school during the working day must report to the school office and make themselves known
- There is a Health and Safety Policy in operation for the benefit of all pupils, staff and visitors to the school campus. This policy is reviewed regularly and is available for reference at the school office.

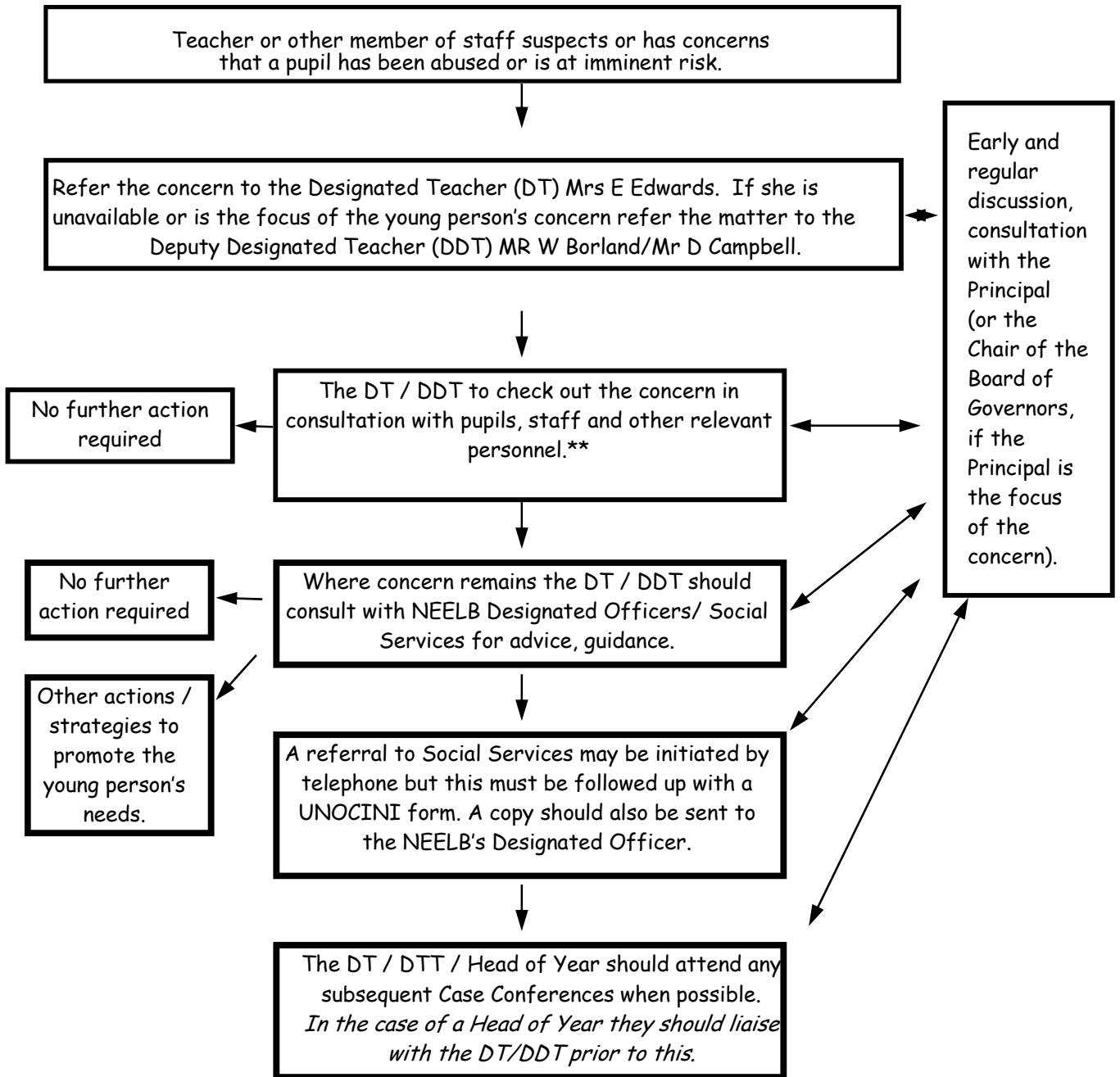
In addition to their daily teaching duties there is a rota for teacher supervision of the school campus at break-time and lunch-time each day and a number of supervisors are employed during the lunch break.

A summary of this policy, in leaflet format, is issued to parents at the beginning of each school year. The full policy can be viewed on the school website.

## Flowchart 1



## Flowchart 2



**\*\* Other Agencies/Personnel: School Medical Personnel, EWO, Year Heads, Educational Psychologist, NEELB Designated Personnel.**

***Unless it is inappropriate to do so, the Parent should be involved as early as possible by the DT/DDT/Principal, of actions to date and those to be taken.***

***The position of the original referrer should be respected and they should be reassured that the needs of the young person are being addressed.***