

# Loreto College



## Child Protection Policy Summary

## **Child Protection / Safeguarding Ethos**

All staff in Loreto have a responsibility for the safeguarding and child protection of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential.

"We seek to know and respect each pupil as an individual person within a caring school community." (Loreto Mission Statement).

The College will do everything possible to protect pupils from abuse or risk of abuse and to foster a safe, supportive, and caring environment. Members of staff are in regular and frequent contact with children and are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse or to be aware of unexplained changes in behaviour or performance which may indicate abuse. All members of staff have a duty of care to our pupils and are asked to exercise vigilance in their observations of pupils so that important signs are not overlooked. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or harm to a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school.

## **Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, "Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland" (DOH, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools" (DENI Circular 2017/04) and the Safeguarding Board for NI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

### **The following Principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy:**

- the child or young person's welfare is paramount.
- the voice of the child or young person should be heard.
- parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together.
- partnership.
- prevention.
- responses should be proportionate to the circumstances.
- protection; and
- evidence based and informed decision making.

## School Safeguarding Team

The following are members of the school's Safeguarding Team:

- Chair of the Board of Governors Mr Harry McDaid
  - Designated Governor for Child Protection Mr Harry McDaid
  - Principal – Mr Stephen Gallagher
  - Designated Teacher - Mrs Oonagh McEwan
  - Deputy Designated Teacher - Mrs Siobhan McCarry and Mrs Frances Pepin
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- members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures initially to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or to the Deputy Designated Teacher if he/she is not available.
  - class teachers and Year Heads should complete the note of concern if there are safeguarding concerns such as: poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse.
  - **staff should not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, and should not investigate, nor should they ask leading questions.

## Support Staff

- if any member of the support staff has concerns about a child or staff member, they should report these concerns to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher if he/she is not available. A detailed written record of the concerns will be made, and any further necessary action will be taken.

## Parents

**The primary responsibility for safeguarding and protection of children rests with parents, who should feel confident about raising any concerns they have in relation to their child.**

Parents can play their part in safeguarding by informing the school:

- if the child has a medical condition or educational need.
- if there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child.
- if there is any change in a child's circumstances, for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility.
- if there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school.

- if their child is absent and should send in a note on the child's return to school. This assures the school that the parent/carer knows about the absence. More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: [www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection)

**It is essential that the school has up to date contact details for the parent/carer.**

### **How a Parent can Raise a Concern**

In Loreto we aim to work closely with parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of their child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner.

If a parent has a concern, they can talk to the Form Class Teacher/Year Head, Head of Key Stage, or the Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Principal.

If they are still concerned, they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. If after this a parent still has concerns, they can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman.

At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Central Referral Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart **Appendix 1**.

### **Where School has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff.**

In Loreto, 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 will complete a Note of Concern and act promptly. **They will not investigate** - this is a matter for Social Services - but will discuss these concerns with the Designated Teacher or with the Deputy Designated Teacher if he/she is not available.

The Designated Teacher will consult with the principal or other relevant staff, always taking care to avoid due delay. If required, advice may be sought from an Education Authority Child Protection Officer. The Designated Teacher may also seek clarification from the child or young person, their parent/carer.

If a Child Protection referral is not required, the school may consider other options including monitoring, signposting, or referring to other support agencies e.g., Family Support Hub with parental consent and, where appropriate, with the child/young person's consent.

If a Child Protection referral is required, the Designated Teacher will seek consent from the parent/carer and/or the child {if they are competent to give this}, unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm.

The designated teacher will phone the Gateway team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI referral form. Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed of the action taken.

**Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff or a Volunteer**

When a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the principal (or the Designated Teacher if the Principal is not available) must be informed immediately. If the complaint is against the principal, then the Designated Teacher should be informed and he/she will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority.

## Appendix 1

### How a Parent can make a Complaint

If a parent has a potential Child Protection concern:

