

ASSUMPTION GRAMMAR SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Assumption Grammar School is committed to promoting the welfare of children and young people and protecting them from harm. This principle underlines the school's policy on Child Protection.

AIMS

- To introduce procedures into the school to ensure that vulnerable pupils are protected and suspected cases of child abuse appropriately dealt with.
- To provide guidelines to staff* on specific measures to protect pupils from abuse. (*Appendix 1 Page 8 and Appendix 5 Page 17-18*).
- To provide clear guidance to staff on referral procedures - detection of abuse (*Appendix 2 Page 9-14*), handling of disclosures by children (Page 4-5), reporting procedures (Page 6-7) and (*Appendix 6 Page 19-20*) including the use of UNOCINI (*Appendix 8 Page 22*).
- To promote understanding among pupils and to provide them with procedures to follow. (*Appendix 3 Page 15*)
- To provide guidance to parents** on how to raise concerns about their child's safety/welfare. (*Appendix 4 Page 16*)
- To appoint a teacher with designated special responsibility for handling cases of child abuse.
- To appoint a second designated teacher to assume, in the case of absence of the first designated teacher, this responsibility.
- To ensure that the school complies with the demands of the Children NI Order 1995.

* *The term staff denotes teaching, non-teaching and peripatetic support teachers.*

** *The term parents denotes those with parental responsibility and those who act as carers.*

GUIDANCE FOR STAFF & VISITORS IN THE CASE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

The primary statutory responsibility for the protection of children from abuse rests with the Social Services. However, all our staff who come into contact with children and young people have a duty to help protect them from abuse or the risk of abuse.

The Board of Governors is sensitive to the fact that relationships between teachers and children are based on a trust and often a confidentiality which fosters a caring environment in which young people develop personally and learn. Staff must maintain a professional relationship with pupils irrespective of the pupils' age. They are in a position of trust and must act accordingly.

There must be no personal relationships, inappropriate conversations, messages or meetings between staff and pupils. Any recourse to the legal "age of consent" or any "consensual" relationship is deemed to be indefensible. Staff has a Duty of Care to act appropriately in their position as in loco parentis.

All staff have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals in order to protect them from harm. Therefore confidentiality must, if necessary, be subordinated to the need to take appropriate action for the child's best interests.

The school indemnifies any employee who complies with school procedures detailed in this policy in making a report of suspected child abuse.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEDURES

1. The designated teachers shall have special responsibility for dealing with cases of suspected child abuse.
2. Members of staff will receive guidance in the recognition, reporting and responsibilities of the school as regards child abuse.
3. New members of staff and teachers involved in Initial Teacher Training will be made aware of the schools procedures and given appropriate guidance.
4. Members of staff who suspect that a child is being or has been abused or to whom a child has disclosed information must follow the schools referral guidance:-
 - He / She must report their suspicions immediately to the Designated Teacher who will discuss the matter with the Principal.
 - The Principal may, in the best interests of the child, seek clarification or advice and consult with SEELB's Designated Officers.
 - If a decision is taken after consultation with the Principal, that there is cause for concern, and that, in the best interests of the child the matter needs to be referred to Social Services, the Designated Teacher will immediately contact the Social Services and later confirm the referral in writing.

The school's pastoral curriculum will include self-protection programmes to help children recognise and deal with a potentially threatening situation. They will also help develop an awareness of the responsibilities of adult life including respect and care for others and the responsibilities of parenthood.

What should staff and visitors do if a case of abuse is disclosed or alleged?

A DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

A child may quite innocently disclose details of abuse that occurs within the family or a child may confide in a member of staff/visitor as the one adult she can trust.

It is important that the member of staff/visitor is sympathetic and supportive. He/She should always believe what the child is saying - Research has shown that children rarely fabricate allegations of sexual abuse.

The member of staff/visitor should remain calm and reassuring - children who have been abused often have low self-esteem and may withdraw if they detect signs of doubt etc. **DO NOT DISPLAY SIGNS OF SHOCK OR DISBELIEF.**

The member of staff/visitor should listen carefully. He/She should never ask leading questions, attempt to cross-examine the child, impose the adult's own assumption or press for evidence. e.g. Do not say "What did he do next"? This can later be interpreted as putting ideas into a child's mind. Instead say, "Tell me what happened".

It is not the responsibility of staff/visitors to carry out investigations into suspected or reported abuse. They simply seek discreet clarification or listen to disclosures of the child.

THE MEMBER OF STAFF/VISITOR MUST THEN TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Do not promise to keep secret what the child has said.
2. Do not discuss concerns with the parent(s) or with anyone who is not involved in the care of the child. If the child's allegations prove to be untrue, reporting them to someone who is not concerned with the care of the child may be deemed defamatory.
3. Report immediately to one of the designated teachers.

4. Prepare a detailed report adhering to format on Child Protection Incident Record Form (*Appendix 6 Page 19*).
5. Keep a copy of the report securely and pass a copy to the designated teacher.

B IF THE ABUSE IS MERELY SUSPECTED

The designated teacher must always be informed even if abuse is merely suspected. If injuries are noticed, keep a note of when and how bruises etc. were seen. If the child makes any reference (or if a parent does) to marks or bruises which are suspicious, note these down as accurately as possible.

SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING INCIDENT/ SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE

**After the disclosure to member of staff/visitor of concern
or suspicion of abuse**

**DESIGNATED TEACHERS AND MEMBER OF STAFF/VISITOR TO
WHOM DISCLOSURE WAS MADE - EXPLAIN TO CHILD THE
PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE CONTACTED AND WHY.**

**CHILD IS ASSURED THAT ONLY THOSE WHO NEED TO KNOW
WILL BE INFORMED**



**JOT DOWN NOTES - FACTS, TIME, DATES, CHILD'S WORDS,
OBSERVATION - RETAIN COPY SECURELY**



CONTACT ONE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHERS.



**DESIGNATED TEACHERS - DISCUSS WITH PRINCIPAL.
PREPARE WRITTEN REPORT**



DESIGNATED TEACHER MAKES REFERRAL TO SOCIAL SERVICES

RECORDING INFORMATION IN CASES OF SUSPECTED OR ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE

NB: RECORDS MUST BE KEPT SECURELY AT ALL STAGES

The member of staff/visitor to whom the disclosure is made:-

1. Makes rough notes as soon as possible after the disclosure. Retains these notes **securely**.
2. Records - Time, Date, Place.
3. Records - Words used by the child (exact words).
4. Records - Noticeable non-verbal behaviour.
5. Records (at time of a disclosure or in case of suspected abuse) - injuries, bruises, when observed (sketches may be helpful).
6. Records - Action taken - To whom reported.
7. Retains details and stores securely.
8. Passes copy to Designated Teacher.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDED MEASURES TO PROTECT PUPILS FROM ABUSE

- Where staff/visitors meet pupils on a one-to-one basis, they should ensure that the meeting takes place in a room with visual access or with the door open.
- Staff/visitors should not undertake a car or minibus journey alone with a single pupil. In exceptional circumstances the parents should be contacted to give permission.
- Staff/visitors should not engage in or tolerate any behaviour - verbal, psychological or physical - that can be construed as bullying.
- Staff/visitors should avoid any form of contact or language which might be interpreted as inappropriate.
- Staff/visitors should adhere to school policy in the use of images/ photographs of pupils.
- Pupils in R.S.E. class will receive information designed to heighten their awareness of Child Abuse and will be given strategies to deal with this.
- All new staff must receive a Police Check. (See Appendix 7 Page 21)
- Access to the school by visitors should be controlled.
- Visitors must report to Reception and sign in.
- All staff receive a copy of the school's Child Protection Policy.
- All visitors to the school, whose work brings them into contact with pupils, will be given a copy of "A Code of Conduct for Visitors whose work brings them into contact with pupils" (*Appendix 5 Page 17-18*).

GUIDANCE ON RECOGNITION OF ABUSE

Definition Of Child Abuse

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 a residential, hospital or institutional setting or in a 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. Abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical Injury**

The deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

- **Emotional Abuse**

The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that she is worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as she meets the needs of the other person. It may involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive: (faltering growth).

Taken from "*A Short Guide to Regional Policy and Procedures*" Area Child Protection Committees' April 2005.

Recognising the Signs

Below is an extract from "Child Abuse and The Children Act", ATL Publications

There are certain symptoms that children who are suffering, or have suffered abuse are likely to exhibit. Some will lead to powerful suspicion, others will simply suggest the possibility that abuse is taking place, or has done so.

BEHAVIOURAL

Teachers see individual children over prolonged periods and can, over time, notice changes in the way they act. They are, therefore, particularly well placed to notice unusual patterns of behaviour which **may** be evidence of abuse.

The word **may** is emphasised, because it is of crucial importance that teachers do not read into a child's behaviour "evidence" that may not signify abuse at all but is instead the result of some other, possibly innocent, factor.

Nonetheless, experienced teachers have found that the following behaviours can, with other indicators, point to the possibility or likelihood of abuse:

- persistent tiredness/sleepiness
- sudden switches in mood or behaviour
- regression to more immature behaviour
- excessive nervousness
- attention-seeking behaviour
- deterioration in school work
- reluctance to participate in physical education, games, swimming or other activities that involve changing clothes or physical exposure
- running away from lessons/school or reluctance to go home at the end of the day
- poor school attendance
- inappropriate conduct towards, or relationships with, peers and/or adults (demonstrations of sexual precocity that cannot easily be explained by normal, natural curiosity)
- compulsive stealing

Obviously no child will demonstrate all these signs simultaneously: some are, indeed, mutually exclusive. Moreover, none of them - individually or in combination - conclusively suggests child abuse.

Nevertheless, teachers must be aware that such signs are not inconsistent with abuse: where there is no other convincing explanation for unusual patterns of behaviour, the possibility of abuse cannot be ruled out. If there are other indicators of abuse, or concerns about the child's family life, the evidence must be carefully investigated.

PHYSICAL

On the face of it, evidence of physical abuse (which often accompanies, or is the culmination of, emotional abuse) is easier to identify and to assess.

But, as any experienced teacher knows, children - particularly young children - frequently have accidents which result in minor or major physical injury. Is there any way to judge whether an injury or succession of injuries is genuinely accidental, or non-accidental and therefore suggestive of abuse? Perhaps the best indication is the reaction of the parent(s) or adults responsible for the child's care.

Where an injury is the result of a genuine accident, they will almost invariably be willing to discuss it openly with the child's teacher(s), as well as the child. Suspicions should be aroused, however, when children and parents/guardians are reluctant to discuss the injury at all, or when their explanations differ in significant detail or are inconsistent with the severity of the injury. This list (by no means exhaustive) indicates the kinds of injury for which an explanation should be sought. In the absence of a convincing account of the cause of such injuries, teachers are justified in suspecting the possibility of non-accidental injury:

- multiple bruising and/or bizarre markings on the skin
- multiple bruising at different stages of resolution
- bruising and/or lacerations around the mouth
- finger and thumb marks on the face or body
- marks or bruising which seem to have been caused by adult bites
- black eyes (particularly when both are affected)
- cigarette burns and other burns or scalds

Any suspicion of physical abuse may be intensified if the following factors are also present:

- reports of earlier abuse of the child or other children in the care of the same parent(s) or other adult(s)
- failure by the parent(s) or responsible adult(s) to mention previous injuries
- a history of unexplained or inadequately explained injuries
- explanations of the cause of the injury which are contradictory and/or implausible
- delay in seeking medical or other help which would clearly have been appropriate
- refusal by the parent(s) or responsible adult(s) to allow the injury and/or its circumstances to be investigated further.

Further Indicators Of Abuse

Where there is, or has been, abuse, there are often other indicators which will manifest themselves at school. Again, it is important to stress that these indicators are not, in themselves, conclusive evidence of abuse: they should merely alert teachers to the possibility - although the possibility is not one to be ignored:

- in very young children, an inexplicable, persistent failure to thrive
- poor relationships between a child and her/his peers, including an inability to make friends
- consistent inability to concentrate, leading to identifiable learning difficulties
- disobedience, attention-seeking, restless or aimless behaviour
- regular avoidance of school medical examinations.

In addition, there are signs which may point, with varying degrees of certainty, to the possibility of **sexual** abuse:

- sudden changes of mood
- regressive behaviour, e.g. a sudden onset of bed-wetting or its persistence in older children
- lack of trust in adults (including, particularly, any marked fear of men)

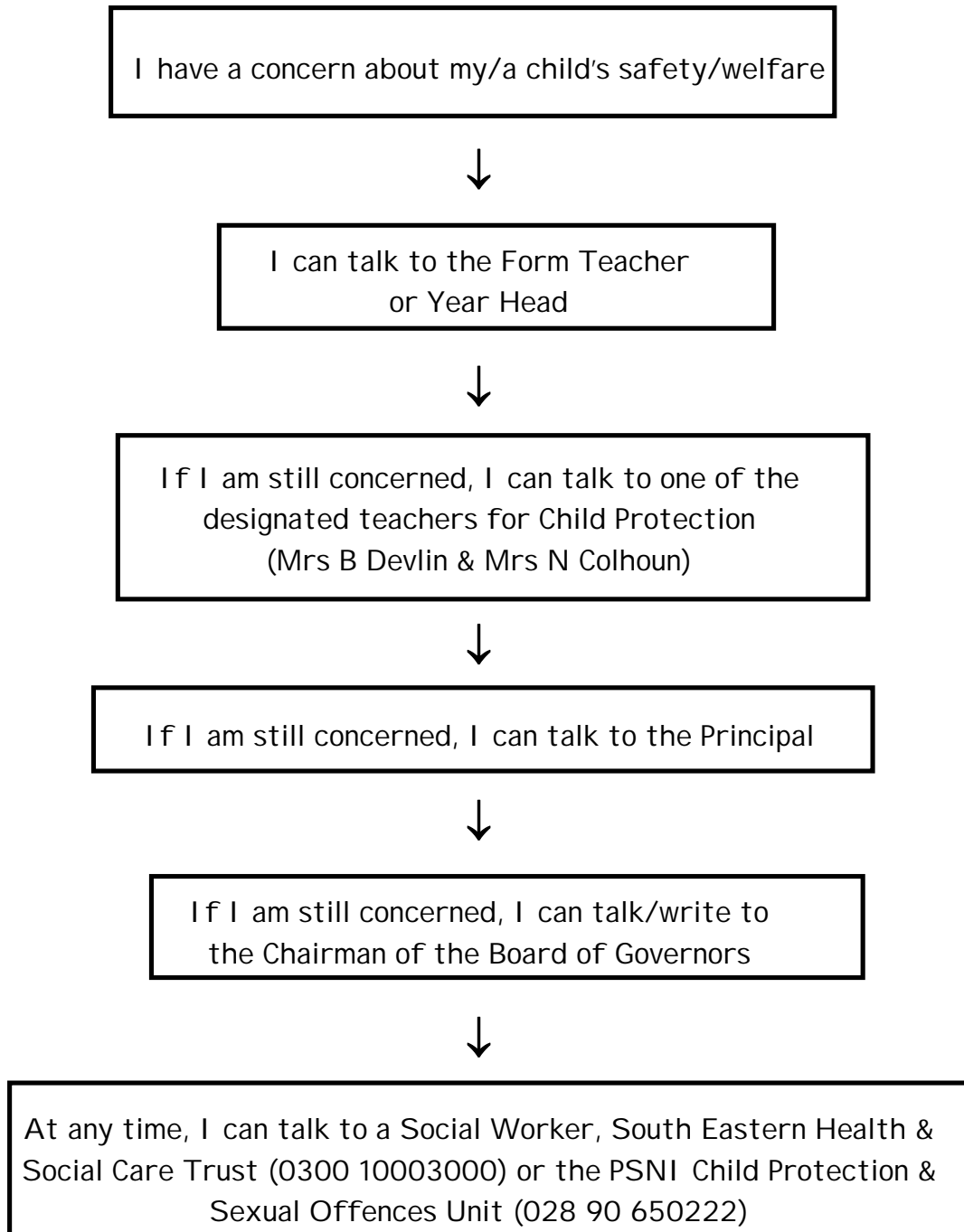
- hints of sexual activity in a child's conversation, play or drawings (this may include unusually graphic sexual additions to book illustrations, or sexually explicit graffiti in exercise books or elsewhere)
- excessive pre-occupation with sexual matters, including:
 - precocious knowledge or apparent experience of adult sexual behaviour
 - repeated episodes of sexual play with peers, particularly if these seem to go beyond mere childish curiosity
 - persistent, obsessive sexual self-stimulation
 - with adults, sexually provocative behaviour which is inappropriate to the age of the child.

The issue of pupil safety and welfare arises in the RSE Pastoral Programme (Years 8-12).

This Programme is reviewed regularly and new materials added as, and when, appropriate.

CHILD PROTECTION

HOW YOU CAN RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY/WELFARE IN ASSUMPTION GRAMMAR SCHOOL



NB The full Child Protection Policy is available on request from the school.

ASSUMPTION GRAMMAR SCHOOL

A Code of Conduct for visitors whose work brings them into contact with pupils.

INTRODUCTION

Visitors must always be mindful that their behaviour towards the pupils must be above reproach. For the majority of visitors, this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has already been their practice.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1 Private Meetings with Pupils

- a) A visitor should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. As far as possible, a visitor should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access or with the door open.
- b) Where such conditions cannot apply, the visitor is advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.
- c) Where possible, another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

2 Physical Contact with Pupils

- a) As a general principle, visitors are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.

However, in some instances, it may be necessary to protect the pupil, others or property from harm. (DENI Circular 1999/9, on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

- b) Physical punishment is illegal.
- c) Following any incident where a visitor feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal.
- d) Visitors should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities.

3 Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

If materials of a sensitive nature are to be used, the visitor should consult with the Principal and, if necessary, the parents beforehand.

4 Relationships and Attitudes

Visitors 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.

The Child Protection Policy is available from the Pastoral Vice Principal through the Secretary in Reception.

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CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT RECORD FORM (CPIR 1)

(NB It is imperative that only factual and neutral information is recorded.)

Details of the Incident/Concerns/Disclosure - day, date, time, place, who dealt with it, observations or circumstances, description of physical/behavioural indicators, child/young person's statements.

Details of anyone else involved; conversations held with anyone else; witnesses e.g. parent, other staff member, designated teacher - day, date, time, place, factual content of conversation.

Referral to Designated Teacher in school who, when (date and time), how, place and advice given by the Designated Teacher.

Signed by School Staff Member: _____ Date: _____

All completed forms should be placed in a sealed envelope and given to the Designated Teacher.

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To be completed by the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher

Advice sought/conversation with - Board Officer for CP, CCMS Diocesan Officer, Social Services, Police CPSA Unit, date, time, place, advice.

Decision not to refer and why. Other action plus type of feedback to all those involved - how, when.

Decision to refer and why. Other action plus type of feedback to all those involved - how, when.

Signed by Designated Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Recruitment and Selection

A Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) check is required for a "regulated position" which involves work with children and young people. (Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003) (POCVA).

The Board of Governors will carry out pre-employment vetting on all posts deemed "regulated positions".

Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland
(UNOCINI)

UNOCINI is a process used to make referrals to social services. When the Designated Teacher has concerns she/he can identify the needs of the child and communicate these needs to professional colleagues outside the organisation through UNOCINI.

UNOCINI offers a structure for recording information collected in conversation with the young person or family and assists in getting other services to help.

UNOCINI can be used when there is a concern about the health, welfare, behaviour, progress or well-being of a young person or if the child's needs are unclear or broader than the school can address. It helps identify and clarify the child's needs and/or engage other services to help meet those needs. It is used when a referral to a specialist agency is appropriate. Whether to use UNOCINI is a decision made jointly with the pupil and/or parent. If a pupil is old enough to understand and competent to make a decision, she should make the decision in consultation with the Designated Teacher.

If, however, a pupil may be deemed at risk of significant harm, or if involving the pupil and/or parent may place the child at further risk, it may not be appropriate to involve the pupil.

Signed: _____
(For the Board of Governors)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____