Seagoe Primary School

Child Protection Policy (Summary)

**Updated September 2022**

Introductory Statement

The following statements of principle, policy and procedure aim to set the conceptual framework which underpins the practices within Seagoe Primary School. This ethos is reflected in all actions and decisions taken by staff as they follow the detailed guidance set out in the ELB Child Protection Procedures, DENI Circular 1999/10, Children Order 1995 Guidance and the Southern Area Child Protection Committee Procedures.

This policy reflects the desire of those involved in the care and education of children at Seagoe Primary School to provide a secure and safe environment and is based on the following principles of Child Protection:

* The child’s welfare must always be paramount; this overrides all other considerations. Where a child is disabled or has special needs these must be taken into consideration.
* A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict, the child’s interests must always come first.
* Children have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may affect their lives.
* Parents have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters which affect their family.
* Actions taken to protect the child should not in themselves be abusive by causing the child unnecessary distress or further harm.
* Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation; the child’s needs should be considered in the context of the family.

Seagoe Primary School recognises that, in addition to pupils’ learning, the school has a pastoral care and responsibility towards its pupils who have the right to be protected from harm. Consequently, we can be expected to do whatever is reasonable to safeguard and promote the welfare and safety of all pupils.

Context

The issues of Child Protection are a sensitive area for children. Our school seeks to support the child’s personal development in ways which will foster understanding, security, confidence and independence. This will include the concept of healthy relationships between children and adults.

Safeguarding Team

Acting Principal + Designated Teacher Mrs Cathy Poots

Deputy Designated Teacher Mrs Judith Curlett

Deputy Designated Teacher Nursery Mrs Nikki Maginn

Board of Governors Chairman Rev. T Cadden

Designated Governor Mrs Diane Kane

Prevention

Seagoe Primary School provides a ‘child protection ethos’ and a preventative curriculum. We offer protection on two levels:

Immediate protection – creating a listening environment that makes it easier for children to share their concerns.

Long term protection – enhancing self-esteem and encouraging social skills.

The curriculum includes a program for children on personal protection. Examples include Internet Safety workshops, Love for Life workshop, NSPCC programs and lessons carried out by the Temperance Society

**Operation Encompass**

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children’s exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of the school safeguarding team. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 ‘Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools’ and a note will be made in the child’s child protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

Response Procedures – when a disclosure is made

* Receive
* Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief
* Accept what is being said
* Take notes at the time if possible
* Reassure
* Reassure the child, but only as far is honest and reliable
* Do not promise confidentiality - we are duty bound to refer
* Attempt to alleviate guilt
* React
* Do not interrogate the child or ask leading questions
* Ask open questions
* Explain the next step in the procedure and who else needs to be informed
* Record
* Make notes at the time, if possible or immediately after the disclosure is made
* Record: date, time, place, exact words used by the child, any noticeable injuries or bruises, sign and date
* Refer
* To the Designated Teacher
* The Designated Teacher will inform the Principal, ELB Designated Officer and outside agencies

Referral

I f 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 must act promptly.**

**He/she should not investigate** – this is a matter for Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher, discuss the matter with her and make detailed notes.

The Designated Teacher will discuss this matter with the Principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record is made.

The Safeguarding Team will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. **If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the Principal is obliged to make a Referral.** Unless there are concerns that the parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Principal may seek clarification or advice and consult with the ELB 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 and on appropriate advice. **The safety of the child is our first priority.**

Allegations against a Member of Staff

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or Designated Teacher, if he is absent) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply unless the complaint is about the Designated Teacher or Principal.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

Allegations against the Principal

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Designated Teacher (or Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The Designated Teacher will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

Allegations against the Designated Teacher

Any complaints must be referred to the Principal or the Chairman of Board of Governors.

Transmission of Information

Where a child has been a victim of abuse, such information should be transmitted in strict confidence to any school to which the child transfers.

Permission to divulge such information must be sought from the child’s parents/guardians.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct for staff in school, teaching and non-teaching, has been drawn up and agreed. Adherence to the Code will reduce the risk of allegations being made.

Integral to a clear understanding of standards of behaviour expected of staff is an understanding of the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with children.

In all cases, teachers should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of pupils, particular care should be taken in respect of attitudes, demeanour and language which should reflect the ethos of the school and which cannot be misconstrued as causing emotional abuse.

Board of Governors

Members of the Board of Governors are fully trained in the area of Child Protection. Governors are kept informed of staff training, all Child Protection incidents which occur and any Policy changes.

A full version of the Child Protection Policy is available on request.

**How a Parent can make a complaint**

**Procedure for Parents who wish to raise a Child Protection Concern**

I have a concern about my/a child’s safety.

I can talk to the Class Teacher.

If I am still concerned I can talk to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection **Mrs Poots**, or the Principal **Mr Scott.**

If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors **Rev. T. Cadden**

At any time a parent can talk to a Social Worker at the Gateway Team Telephone: 02871314090

or the PSNI at the Public Protection Unit Telephone 999 (emergency) or 101 (Non-Urgent)