



SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Ethos

Ballyholme Primary School aims to provide a secure and caring environment which is conducive to learning and to the development of self-esteem, and in which all members of the school feel respected, valued and supported. We have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge and any concerns about their emotional or physical well-being must be addressed appropriately.

“Safeguarding is more than child protection. Safeguarding begins with promotion and preventative activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection.” (Co-operating To Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2016)

Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm.

We recognise the contribution that all staff and volunteers make in helping to make our school a safe environment. We promote a child-centred ethos where children are listened to by adults and taken seriously. We recognise that everyone in our school community has a part to play and is committed to safeguarding the children in our care by ensuring that all:

- Children are safe and protected in our school;
- Members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, and all adults who have contact with the children in our school, have been subject to appropriate vetting procedures and have been provided with Child Protection training.

The Purpose of Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures

The Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures we follow are designed to:

- Offer the greatest possible protection to children in our care;
- Safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards the child;
- Ensure that everyone who works in our school – teaching staff, non-teaching staff and volunteers – has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected;
- Encourage all staff to exercise their responsibilities towards children within an effective and legally secure framework;
- Ensure all staff and volunteers in our school have adopted our Code of Conduct for behaviour towards pupils (Appendix 4);
- Ensure staff understand that the ‘...first step in recognising abuse is the ability to entertain the possibility of abuse taking place’. (*Handbook of Clinical Intervention in Child Sexual Abuse 1982*)

Rationale

The Department of Education has issued detailed guidance to schools on dealing with all aspects of Safeguarding and Child Protection – *'A Guide for Schools' (DENI 2017/04)*. The Children (NI) Order 1995 also includes guidance entitled *'Co-operating to Protect Children'*. Ballyholme Primary has adopted the Education Authority (EA) Child Protection Policy and Procedures. The policy for parents summarises the key points from this document.

This policy is also based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) with particular reference to Article 19 which states, *'Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.'* The Children (NI) Order 1995 states that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in all decisions concerning the child. This is also reflected in Article 3 of the UNCRC – *'the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration.'* Article 12 considers the importance of children being heard – *'You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.'* The paramountcy of the child principle underpins our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. The issue of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the school.

Principal (Chair):	Mrs Pamela Rothwell
Designated Teacher:	Mrs Heather Stephens
Deputy Designated Teachers:	Mrs Louise Kennedy Mrs Susan McFerran
Chair of Governors:	Rev Peter Lyle
Designated Governor for Child Protection:	Rev Simon Doogan
Other members as required	eg ICT co-ordinator etc

What is Child Abuse?

As defined in the Children's Order, a child is a person under the age of 18 years.

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 an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely by a stranger'* - Area Child Protection Committees Regional Policy and Procedures (ACPC, 2005).

Abuse of a child may take one or a number of forms including neglect, physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse and abuse caused through domestic violence.

Types of Child Abuse

Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Physical Indicators: constant hunger, poor state of clothing/personal hygiene, untreated medical problems, constant tiredness

Behavioural Indicators: tiredness, listlessness, lack of social relationships, stealing, begging or scavenging, frequently absent or late, low self-esteem

Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Physical Indicators: unexplained bruises or burns, bite marks or welts, unexplained lacerations or fractures, untreated injuries

Behavioural Indicators: self-destructive tendencies, improbable excuses, chronic runaway, aggressive or withdrawn, fear of returning home, reluctant to have physical contact, clothing inappropriate to weather

Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing.

Physical Indicators: soreness or bleeding, torn or stained underclothes, stomach pains or headaches, difficulty in walking or sitting

Behavioural Indicators: depression, inappropriately seductive or precocious, sexually explicit language, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, fear of the dark, outbursts of anger, overly protective to siblings

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Physical Indicators: sudden speech disorder, signs of solvent abuse (mouth sores, smell of glue), wetting/soiling, attention seeking behaviour, poor peer relationships

Behavioural Indicators: neurotic behaviour (rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking), reluctance for parent liaison, fear of new situations, chronic runaway, inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations

Exploitation

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Specific Types of Abuse

Grooming

Child Sexual Exploitation

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse

Female Genital Mutilation

Forced Marriage

Children who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviours

E-Safety/Internet Abuse

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance or power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) 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. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Potential Indicators may be acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation, change in mood - agitated/stressed, appearing distraught/dishevelled, inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age, physical symptoms eg bruising, bite marks, increasing secretiveness around behaviours, low self-esteem, self-harm and other expressions of despair.

Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic Violence and Abuse is threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.

Domestic Violence affects all members of a household. Given the vulnerability of children they are particularly susceptible to the impact of domestic violence which may affect their emotional, psychological, physical and sexual development. The majority of children who have experienced domestic violence meet the definition of 'children in need' as outlined within the Children's (NI) Order 1995. For this reason, all professionals in school and other outside agencies will adopt a zero tolerance policy in addressing domestic violence situations. All allegations of domestic violence will be reported to Social Services.

Sexual Violence and Abuse

Sexual Violence and Abuse is any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).

Please note that coercive, exploitative and harmful behaviour includes taking advantage of an individual's incapacity to give informed consent.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

Potential Indicators are being a girl aged 5-8 within a community where FGM is practised, prolonged return to country of origin for summer break (giving sufficient healing time before return to school), female elder visiting from country of origin, child may tell other children about it, a girl may disclose that she is to have a 'special procedure' or attend a special occasion to 'become a woman', parents state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period.

Procedures For Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

If a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff or other adult in school which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse or risk of abuse, they will report them immediately to the school's Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DT), Miss Ruth Taylor or one of the Deputy Designated Teachers (DDTs), Mrs Louise Kennedy, Mrs Susan McFerran or Mrs Heather Stephens.

He/she should not investigate – this is a matter for relevant authorities such as Social Services or PSNI.

It should be noted that disclosures made to a member of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. In the interests of the child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, this will strictly be on a 'need to know' basis. When a child transfers to a new school, information on pupil welfare will be shared with the Designated Teacher of the receiving school.

As part of the responsibilities of the DT and DDTs they will ensure:

- All staff are aware of these procedures
- Arrangements are in place so that any suspected cases are reported to the Principal and, if appropriate (following advice from Education Authority Child Protection Officers) to Social Services or PSNI.

The procedures for reporting abuse are:

- The member of staff raises the concern with the DT or DDTs and may submit a Note of Concern outlining details of the concern/incident.
- The DT or DDT discusses the concern with the member of staff, makes a written report and, after consultation with the Principal, contacts the relevant authorities.
- If there are concerns that a child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral.
- Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.
- 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 paramount.**

In an emergency situation where the child is deemed at risk and in need of immediate safeguarding or where the Principal might not be available for consultation, the DT will take all necessary steps to safeguard the child in line with Child Protection protocol.

If 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. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Designated Teacher). Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

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

For further details on procedures for reporting suspected child abuse, please refer to flow diagrams included in this policy (Appendices 1-3).

Child Protection records are retained/destroyed in line with the Disposal of Records Schedule.

The Preventative Curriculum

We place great emphasis on the importance of teaching our children how to deal appropriately with any situations that may pose a threat to their emotional or physical well-being. We aim to help our children to learn about the risks of possible abuse, help them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and to acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

A structured programme for Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) is part of the curriculum we provide for each year group. This is supported by Circle Time Activities in every class and supplemented by age appropriate workshops from Childline/NSPCC, Women's Aid, PSNI and the 'Love for Life' Programme which is presented to our P7 pupils.

Our main aims are to ensure that:

- Children have sufficient age appropriate knowledge about themselves to be able to recognise appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact
- Children are aware of strategies which they may use to protect themselves from possible abusive situations.

Safe Recruitment Measures

All adults working in the school or volunteering to help in any capacity are subject to child protection screening procedures and will have undertaken Child Protection Awareness Training in accordance with Education Authority guidelines.

The responsibilities and processes to be followed are clearly set out in: DE Circular 2013/01 'Disclosure and Barring Arrangements: Vetting Requirements for Paid Staff working in or Providing a Service in Schools': www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201301-guidance-schools-and-employingauthorities-pre-employment-safer

DE Circular 2012/19 'Disclosure and Barring Arrangements: Changes to Pre-Employment Vetting Checks for Volunteers Working in Schools from 31st March 2025': <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/DE%20~%20Recruitment%20Practices%20for%20Staff%20and%20Volunteers%20Working%20in%20or%20Providing%20a%20Service%20for%20School.pdf>

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.

Further information see [The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the School Safeguarding Team

- The monitoring and periodic review of Child Protection and Safeguarding arrangements in the school;
- Support for the Designated/Deputy Designated Teachers in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities.

The Role of the Principal

- As Secretary to the Board of Governors, to ensure Child Protection is on the agenda of Board of Governor meetings at least once annually;
- To inform the Governors of any new DE guidance (circulars and letters) related to child protection/safeguarding;
- To take the lead in the Safeguarding Team in the school;
- To ensure that the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually and issued to parents every 2 years;
- To ensure that the school's anti-bullying and positive behaviour policies are regularly reviewed and issued to pupils and parents who must be consulted during the review process;
- To ensure that there is a timetabled review of all pastoral care policies (every 2/3 years).

The Role of the Designated Teacher (or Deputy Designated Teachers)

- Managing the Child Protection concerns of any member of teaching and support staff including all record keeping;
- Liaising with the Education Authority (EA) Designated Officers for Child Protection;
- Collaborating with the Principal in making referrals to Social Services or the PSNI Public Protection Unit
- Raising awareness of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures with teaching and support staff through regular (at least once every 2 years) "whole school" child protection training;
- Taking the lead in the development of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Providing an Annual Report to the Board of Governors.

The Role of the Designated Governor for Child Protection

- Providing advice to Governors about:
 - The role of the Designated Teacher
 - The content of safeguarding and child protection policies
 - The content of the code of conduct for adults within the school
 - The content of termly updates and annual Child Protection Report
 - Any deficiencies in the school's safeguarding/child protection best practice arrangements as identified in audits undertaken by the Safeguarding team
 - Any remedial action taken or recommended to address deficiencies in safeguarding/child protection practice requirements.
- Receiving and if necessary leading in the management of an allegation against the Principal in the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair (*DE Circular 2015/13*).
- Safeguarding Responsibilities do not include:
 - Investigating concerns or allegations
 - Asking for information or details about individual cases or pupils
 - Acting independently.

The Role of the Chair of Governors

- Ensuring a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed
- Ensuring Governors have undertaken the appropriate Strand 1, 2 or 3 training in relation to child protection
- Ensuring the Board of Governors annually receive a Child Protection report and the Record of Child Abuse Complaints (Complaints Against Staff)
- Procedures relating to the recruitment, selection and vetting of staff including volunteers are being followed
- There is a robust Code of Conduct (Appendix 4) for all adults working within the school – this must include volunteers, sports' coaches, extended school personnel
- Plays a pivotal role in contributing to the creation and maintenance of a safeguarding ethos within the school environment
- In the event of a child protection complaint/allegation/concern being raised about the Principal, it is the Chairperson who takes the lead responsibility for managing such a complaint/allegation/concern – in keeping with DE Guidance and the school's policy and procedures
- Liaising with the Principal regarding allegations of child abuse against a member of staff or volunteer. This may include possible involvement in multi-agency strategy discussions (though no direct investigatory role) and decision-making regarding the member of staff or volunteer eg use of precautionary suspension.

Training

Governors, Principal, DT and DDTs for Child Protection will receive up-to-date training in line with Education Authority programmes. Training of staff will take place every two years. Any member or staff who misses CP training will receive mop-up training during the term.

DT and DDTs should attend refresher training every 3 years. A certificate of attendance will be issued to DT and DDTs as proof of attendance and this may be examined by ETI during any inspection.

The Role of Parents

The overriding concern of all adults in the school must be the care, welfare and safety of the child. The Children (NI) Order 1995 clearly identifies the welfare of the child as being of paramount importance. We recognise that parents share these responsibilities and that they can help us to ensure that our school is a safe environment for every child.

We recognise that reporting abuse or suspected abuse is always difficult but the overriding concern must always be the safety of the child.

Parents or others who have any child protection concerns should raise these immediately with the DT or DDTs. Child Protection concerns should always be raised directly with the DT or DDTs.

For further details on procedures for reporting suspected child abuse, please refer to flow diagrams included in this policy (Appendices 1-3).

Relevant Documents/Resources

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following Safeguarding policies and school information:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use of the Internet
- Health & Safety Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- RSE Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers
- DENI: *Safeguarding and Child Protection in Education – Guidance*
- DENI: *Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection*

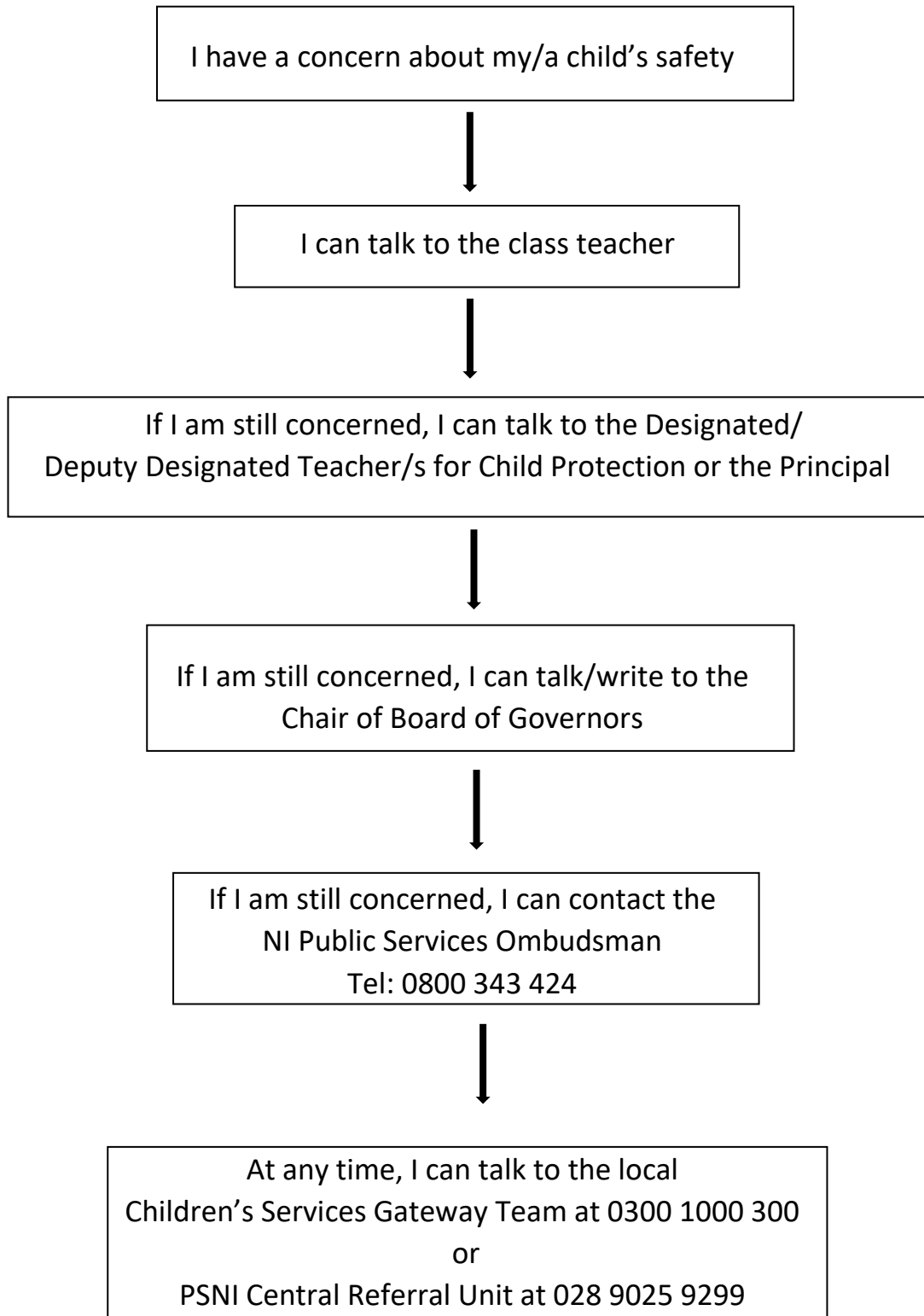
The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures will be reviewed annually and parents and pupils will receive a copy every two years.

Last reviewed and Ratified by Board of Governors: September 2026

Next Review Date: September 2027

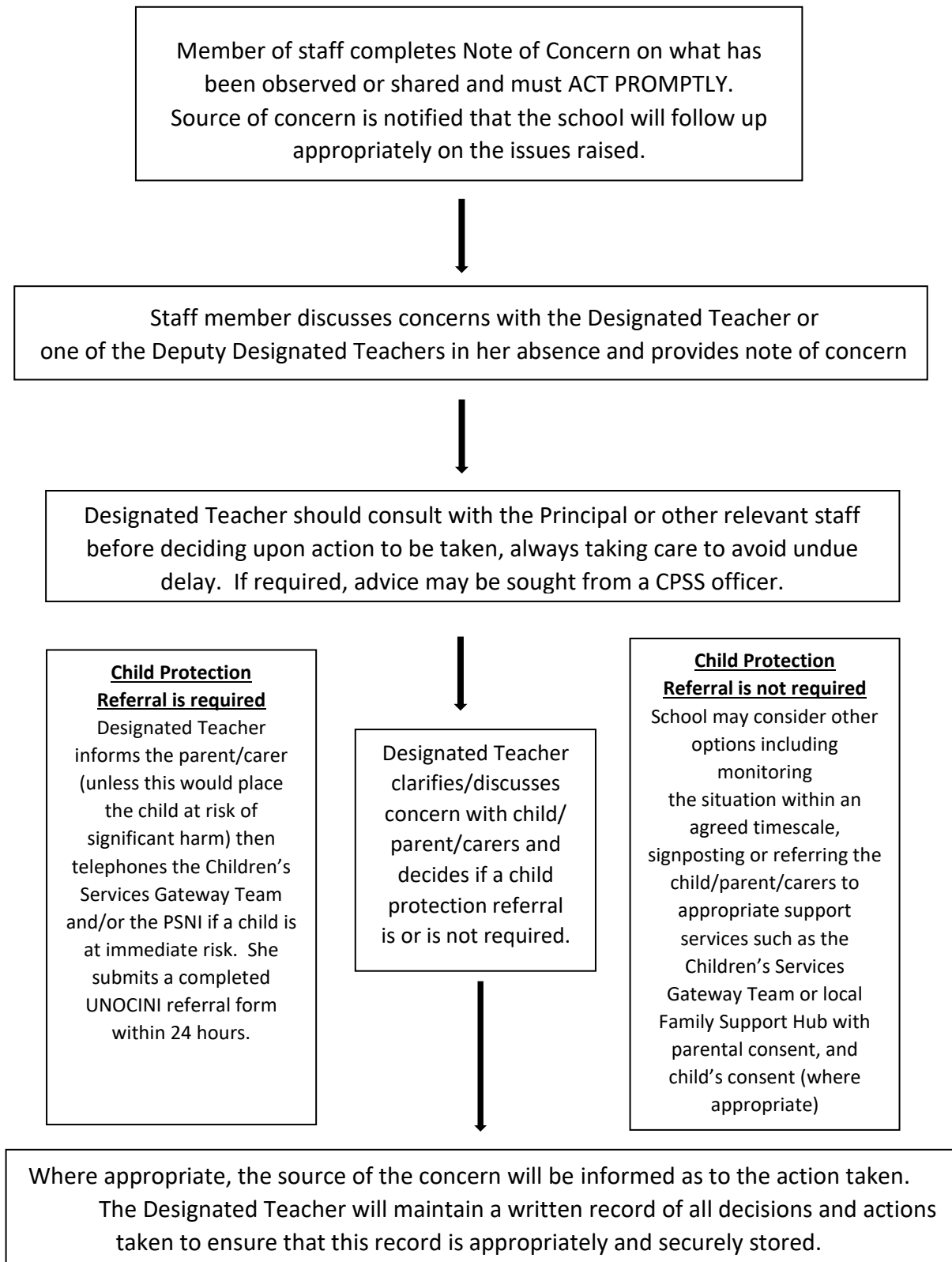
APPENDIX 1

If a parent has a potential child protection concern:



APPENDIX 2

Procedure where the school has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff:



APPENDIX 3

Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff:

