



# Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

## Designated Governor for Child Protection

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*(See Appendix 9 of the full policy for further information on the Child Protection Team)*

## Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

### Context

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy of The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy of St Malachy's College promotes an environment in which students, staff and parents are committed to the idea of excellence within a caring, supportive community. Within our College community, the protection and safeguarding of all students is of paramount importance. St Malachy's, as a Catholic school seeks through its pastoral care, to recognise and respect the uniqueness of all individuals, to enable them to reach their full potential and to help create the world as God intends it to be. The ETI Inspection Report noted that

*“the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.”*

and this was affirmed in the Sustaining Improvement Inspections in 2016 and 2019.

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy seeks to uphold the ethos of St Malachy's College as encapsulated in its Mission Statement and Motto:

‘St Malachy's College, as a Catholic School, is dedicated to provide academic excellence in the context of a Christian community ethos. It seeks to preserve its traditions of spirituality and learning, so that all pupils and staff can experience continuity in achievement and further their own spiritual, educational and personal growth in a pleasant, interesting and stimulating environment’.

### 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” (DHSSPSNI, 2017),

the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools” Circular 2017/04 (amended September 2019; updated June 2020, updated June 2022) and the SNBI 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
- Evidence-based and informed decision-making

### Adult Safeguarding

Adult safeguarding is based on fundamental human rights and on respecting the rights of adults as individuals, treating all adults with dignity and respecting their right to choose. It involves empowering and enabling all adults, including those at risk of harm, to manage their own health and wellbeing and to keep themselves safe. It extends to intervening to protect where harm has occurred or is likely to occur and promoting access to justice. All adults at risk should be central to any actions and decisions affecting their lives.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring that the welfare of vulnerable adults is paramount at all times
- Maximising the student's choice, control and inclusion, and protecting their human rights
- Working in partnership with others in order to safeguard vulnerable adults

We will follow the procedures outlined in this policy when responding to concerns or disclosures of abuse relating to our students who are 18 years or over. (See Appendix 2 of the full Child Protection policy)

# Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

## Roles and Responsibilities

### **Board of Governors**

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The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland Order 2003 places a statutory duty on Boards of Governors to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
- Have a written child protection policy
- Specifically address the prevention of bullying in school behaviour management policies

### **The Principal**

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The Principal has the delegated responsibility for establishing and managing the safeguarding systems within the College.

### **The Safeguarding Team**

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This team includes the Chair of the BoG, the Designated Governor for Child Protection, the Principal (as Chair) and the Designated Teacher and the DDT. The team will co-opt the Deputy Designated Teachers as required to help address specific issues. This Safeguarding Team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the College.

The Safeguarding Team reviews their child protection/safeguarding practices annually using the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) pro-forma entitled 'Guidance for the evaluation of child protection/safeguarding.'

The College also has a designated Safeguarding team for day to day co-ordination of safeguarding throughout the College. The Vice Principal is the Designated Teacher and the three Heads of School are the Deputy Designated Teachers, and the Specialist SEN teacher for Key Stage 3.

### **Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Vice Principal for Pastoral Care)**

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The Designated Teacher for Child Protection has lead responsibility for the day to day implementation of Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures as laid out in the policy.

### **Staff**

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All staff have a shared responsibility for the development of a safe and secure environment consistent with the College ethos. The designation of a teacher for this purpose should not be seen as diminishing the role of all members of staff in being alert to signs of abuse and being aware of the procedures to be followed. It is the duty of all staff to report any safeguarding or child protection concern. Form Tutors, Heads of Year and Heads of School have specific responsibilities as laid out under structures in the Positive Behaviour and Pastoral Care Policies. St Malachy's College operates a Code of Conduct for all staff and volunteers.

### **External Agencies**

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The College maintains strong links with external agencies to provide a relevant preventative curriculum. The Safeguarding Team are trained by Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) and liaise with the CPSSS when necessary. The Designated teachers liaise with Social Services and attend, as far as possible, all Looked After Children Conferences and Child Protection Review Meetings.

## Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

### Parents

The College works in partnership with parents and carers to support our students pastorally and academically. Parents have the right to expect that the College is a secure and supportive environment for their children. 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.

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy, Pupil Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Complaints Policy will be issued to parents/carers at intake. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be reissued and least every two years. In working in partnership with parents, the College will always protect the best interests of the child and, in cases of suspected abuse, may refer cases direct to the investigative agencies. It is important that parents take time to read these policies.

Parents/carers must provide up to date contact details and to follow procedures for attendance and punctuality. Parents are required to inform 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 their child is absent and should send in a note/ email either on the day of absence or 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: [www.eani.org](http://www.eani.org).

### Operation Encompass

When the Police attend an incident of domestic violence where one of our pupils is present, they will inform the school's Designated Teacher for Child Protection at the start of the next school day. This information is shared in strict confidence and College staff are only told on a need-to-know basis.

Following any notification from the PSNI, our staff will provide immediate support to any child who has been the victim of domestic abuse. We know that when children do witness domestic abuse at home, this is a highly traumatic experience for them. By taking part in Operation Encompass, we can provide tailored and compassionate support to our pupils, in line with our College ethos. This builds on our existing commitment to child safeguarding.

Should you wish to find out more information, please contact the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or alternatively you can read more about Operation Encompass at [www.operationencompass.org](http://www.operationencompass.org).

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### Definition of Harm

(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and young People in Northern Ireland August 2017)

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier; for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

*(Continued overleaf)*

## Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm. Harm can be caused by:

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Sexual Abuse**

occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others.

### **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 serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected also suffer from other types of abuse.

**All of the above definitions are from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2017)**

### **Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English or sexual orientation. We have included information about children with increased vulnerabilities in our full policy.

### **Specific Types of Abuse**

In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse that we in St Malachy's College are aware of and have included in our policy. These include:

#### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of 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. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017).

#### **Grooming**

is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/ or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

## Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

### **Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse**

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The Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy (2016) defines domestic and sexual violence and abuse as follows:-

#### **Domestic Violence and Abuse:**

'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.'

#### **Operation Encompass:**

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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.

#### **Sexual Violence and Abuse**

'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.

If it comes to the attention of school staff that Domestic Abuse is, or may be, affecting a child, this will be passed on to the Designated/Deputy Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team.

### **Children who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour**

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Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child's development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. Schools support children and

*(Continued overleaf)*



## Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships. Teachers are often therefore in a good position to consider if behaviour is within the normal continuum or otherwise.

It must also be borne in mind that sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the school's positive behaviour policy but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

### Visitors to the College

Visitors to schools, such as parents, suppliers of goods and services, to carry out maintenance etc do not routinely need to be vetted before being onto the College. However, such visitors should be managed by school staff and their access to areas and movement within the school should be restricted as needs require. All relevant visitors to the College who will be meeting with students are required to report to Reception and must abide by the Code of Conduct for visitors whose work brings them into contact with pupils.

### The Preventative Curriculum

The College provides a structured and relevant preventative curriculum which includes raising awareness of Safeguarding and Child Protection issues and managing risks. Key safeguarding messages are addressed through the Tutorial Programmes, Assemblies and relevant subject Schemes of Work. Messages are also actively promoted through Anti-Bullying Week, Safer Internet Week, Drama Performances and visits from outside speakers. Year 14 pupils make up the Anti-Bullying Team and the Resilience Team. They have a high profile with the pupils and posters identifying the team and how to speak to them are displayed prominently within

the College. Names and pictures of the College Safeguarding Team are displayed in all areas of the College and communicated to pupils and parents.

### Links to Other College Policies

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy operates in conjunction with other relevant policies; Anti-Bullying, Pastoral Care, Drugs and Alcohol, Reasonable Force and Safe Handling, Positive Behaviour Management, Critical Incident, Special Needs, Educational Visits, Pupil Attendance and Punctuality, RSE and Code of Conduct for Visitors whose work brings them into contact with pupils.

### Relationships and Sexuality Education

Safeguarding and Child Protection issues and managing risks are also promoted through the College Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy. This policy takes account of CCEA published updated guidance for primary and post-primary schools on RSE in August 2015 and DE Circular 2015/22 - Relationship and Sexuality Education.

# Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

## Procedure for Reporting an Incident of Child Abuse

Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the College's non-teaching staff sees such signs, he/ she should immediately bring them to the attention of either the Designated Teacher or Deputy.

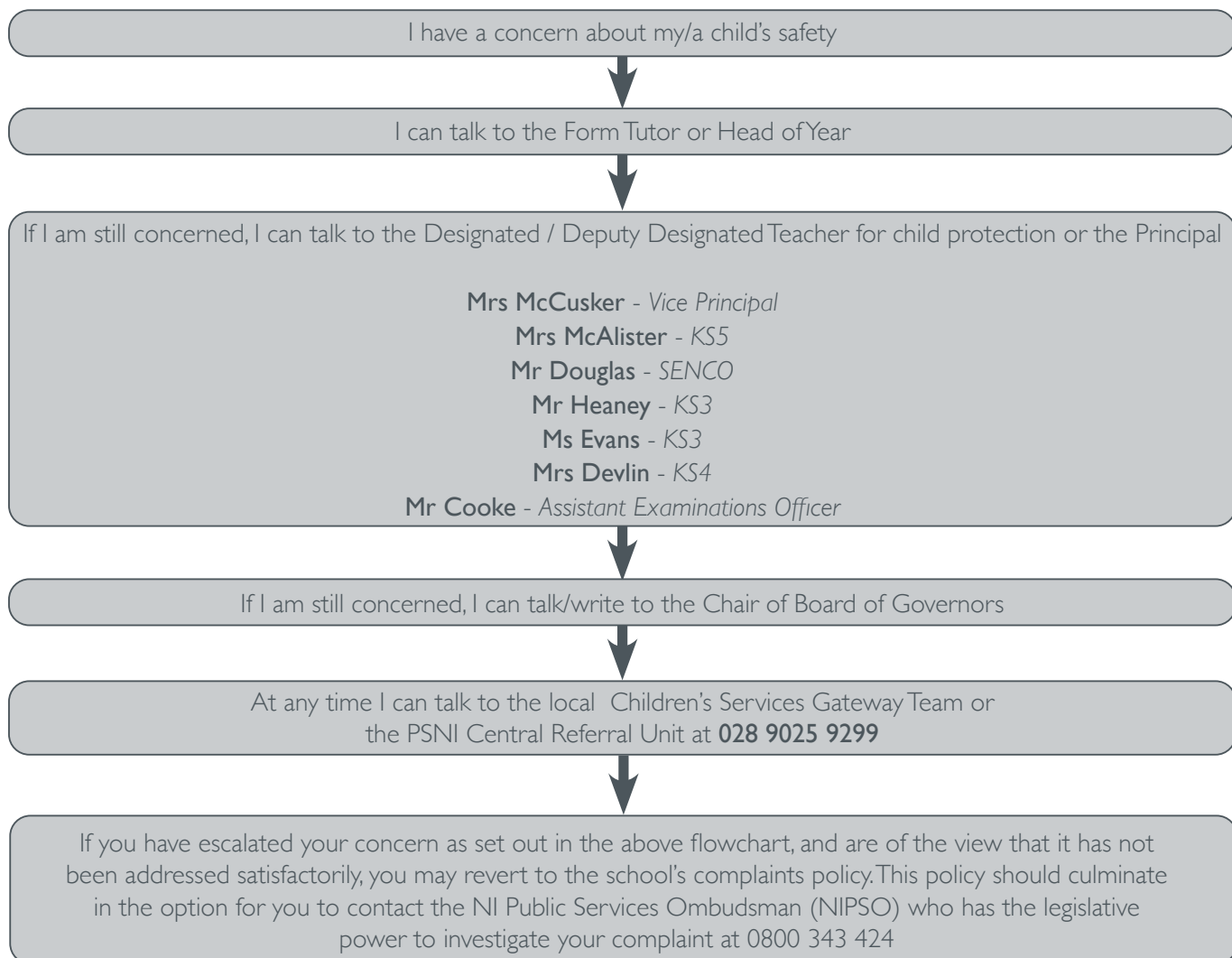
It is not the responsibility of teachers and other education staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers.

Under Articles 65 and 66 of the Children (NI) Order, this is the statutory responsibility of the investigating agencies, Children's Social Services and/or Police.

In the event of an allegation that a child has been abused by a member of staff, procedures will be followed in line with DENI Circular 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff.

*The arrangements for parents to make known to staff any concerns they may have about the safety of their (or another) child are outlined in the table below.*

### If a parent has a potential child protection concern:





# NEED TO TALK



**Mrs. McCusker**  
Designated Teacher for  
Child Protection



**Mr. Douglas**  
SENCO / Deputy  
Designated Teacher KS4



**Mr. Heaney**  
Deputy Designated  
Teacher KS3



**Mr. Cooke**  
Deputy Designated  
Teacher



**Mrs McAlister**  
Deputy Designated  
Teacher KS5



**Mrs Devlin**  
Deputy Designated  
Teacher KS4



**Ms Evans**  
Deputy Designated  
Teacher KS3

The

## **St. Malachy's College Child Safeguarding Team**

*are there for you*

**If you are concerned don't stay silent.**

Talk to family, friends, teachers,  
your Form Tutor or a member  
of the Child Safeguarding Team  
above.

## CONTACT EMAILS

Mrs McCusker: [dmccusker152@c2kni.net](mailto:dmccusker152@c2kni.net)

**KS5**

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**KS4**

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**KS3**

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