



DE LA SALLE HIGH SCHOOL
DOWNPATRICK

**CHILD PROTECTION
POLICY**

We in De La Salle have a primary responsibility for care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge, and we will carry out this duty through our pastoral care policy, which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. One way in which we seek to protect our pupils is by helping them learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staffs of our school have also adopted a Code of Practice for our behaviour towards pupils. This Code is set out with this policy statement.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school – teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers – have clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child, and the welfare of each child is of paramount consideration. The problem 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.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE? We use the following definition:

NEGLECT - the persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

PHYSICAL - physical injury to a child, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

SEXUAL - the sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification; the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles.

EMOTIONAL – persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.

BULLYING - is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both victim and bully will be personally contacted immediately after bullying behaviour is identified.

Any complaint by a parent that their child is, or may be, bullied will be fully investigated by the Head of Year, and action will be taken to protect the victim. This will usually include ensuring that another child or small group of children befriends and supports the child being bullied during the school day. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the Head of Year, indicating the investigation which has been carried out and the action being taken.

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of any privileges or position of responsibility he holds in the school. His behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped. If a pupil's bullying behaviour persists, the second stage will be to instigate the child protection procedures described below.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED OR DISCLOSED CHILD ABUSE

The designated teacher for child protection is Mr Kevin Murray, Pastoral Head. In his absence Mr. C Maguire, Principal, will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

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 must act promptly.

He/she should not investigate – this is a matter for the Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with him/her, and make full notes. The designated teacher will discuss the matter with the Principal as a matter of urgency and plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record is made. The Principal, in consultation with the designated teacher, 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 school is obliged to make a referral. **Unless these are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.**

The Principal may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Board's Designated 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.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse, the Principal will inform:

-The Social Services

-The Education and Library Board's Designated Officer for Child Protection

(This will be done in an envelope marked 'CONFIDENTIAL – CHILD PROTECTION')

If a complaint about possible abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or designated teacher, if he 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 his deputy, if he is not available must be informed immediately. He will inform the Chairman of the Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do is he/she has concerns about a child, or unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the designated teacher.

It should be noted that information given to members 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, only those who need to know will be told.

The staff of the school will review the Child Protection Procedures regularly. The designated teacher will provide training for all staff biannually, as recommended by DENI.