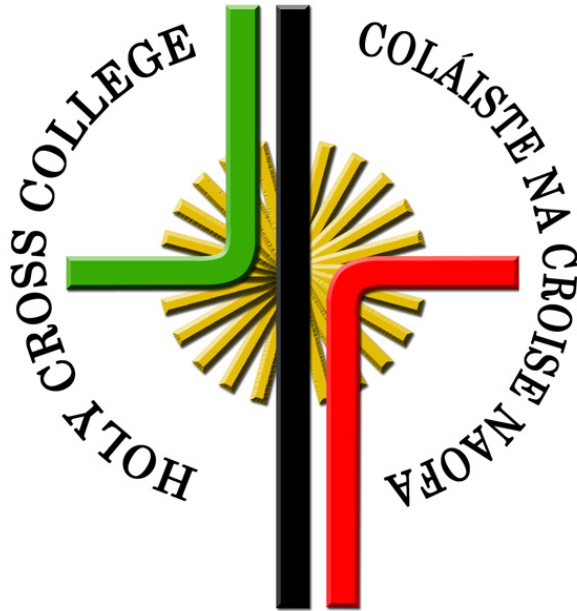


HOLY CROSS COLLEGE  
STRABANE

**CHILD PROTECTION  
POLICY**



Date approved by the Board of Governors ..... February 2023  
Next policy review date ..... August 2023

## **1. Child Protection Ethos**

We in Holy Cross College have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school

## **2. Principles**

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, The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Pastoral Care in Schools- Child Protection"(DENI Circular 99/10), the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005), Co- operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2016), Safeguarding Board Act Northern Ireland (2011).

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy.

- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously.
- We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- In any incident the child's welfare must be paramount, this overrides all other considerations.
- 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 interest must always come first.

## **3. Other Relevant Policies**

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. The child protection therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Special Educational Needs
- Educational Visits
- Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- eSafety Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Use of Substances
- Intimate Care Policy

**These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing to have a copy should contact the School office or consult the Holy Cross College website at [www.holycrosscollege.co.uk](http://www.holycrosscollege.co.uk)**

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **4.1 The School Safeguarding Team**

The following are members of the school's Safeguarding Team

- Chair of the Board of Governors, Mr John Dudgeon.
- Designated Governor for Child Protection, Mrs Mary Cunningham.

- Principal, Mr Ciarán Johnston.
- Designated Teachers, Mrs Nicola Gallagher – KS3; Mrs Patricia Devine – KS4/5.

The main role of the team is to:

- Monitor and periodically audit the safeguarding and child protection arrangements in the school;
- Identify any actions required to address audit findings or ETI inspection of its safeguarding/child protection arrangements;
- Provide support for the Designated Teachers in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities.

The roles and responsibilities of individual members of the Safeguarding team are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

#### **4.2 The Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors as a body must ensure that the school fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities in keeping with current legislation and DE guidance including:

- ensuring that safeguarding/child protection is a standard item on the agenda of Board of Governor meetings;
- approving the school's child protection policy at least once every 2 years;
- ensuring that there is a time-tabled review (every 2/3 years) of all other safeguarding policies and that they are presented to the BOG for approval;
- receiving annual child protection reports;
- ensuring there is a staff code of conduct for all adults working in the school;
- attending relevant child protection/safeguarding training for Governors .

#### **4.3 School Staff**

Teachers, Classroom Assistants and other Support staff in school see children on a daily basis over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and a child may choose to disclose to them allegations of abuse.

Members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection/Principal. In addition class teachers and Year Heads should also keep the Designated Teacher informed in writing or verbally about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse.

If a member of staff does not feel their concerns are being taken seriously or action to safeguard the child is not being taken by professionals and the child is considered to be at risk of continuing harm then they should speak to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Principal, Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection or to Social Services.

#### **4.4 Parents**

Parents can play their part in safeguarding by:

- telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's well-being;
- making requests to the school in advance for permission to allow their child to attend medical or other appointment including providing details of any arrangements for the collection of the child
- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the child after school;(primary schools only)
- familiarising themselves with the school's safeguarding policies e.g. Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Internet and Child Protection Policies;

- reporting to the school office when they visit the school
- sharing any concerns they may have in relation to their child with the school.

## **5. Definition of Harm**

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

### **(Co- operating To Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2016)**

Harm can be caused by:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)

The procedures outlined in this document are intended to 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 a child.

#### **5.1 Concerns arising due to the Coronavirus Pandemic**

- A Risk Assessment is in place and updated to reflect the evolving situation regarding COVID-19 and is in line with current PHA and Department of Education Guidance.
- Support is available for students who present with academic and pastoral concerns relating to the pandemic, as well as additional support for mental health and well-being.
- The College Guidance, Pastoral & Curriculum Teams facilitate the support mentioned above and in addition support is facilitated through the Engage III Programme, School Counselling Service, Extended Schools Programme and a range of other external organisations.

## **6. Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse**

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature. **Receive** – listen to what the child says, without displaying shock or disbelief. Accept what is said, making brief cursory notes. These notes should be retained.

**Reassure** - ensure the child is reassured that he/she will be safe and his/her interests will come first. **No promise of confidentiality can or should be made to a child or anyone else giving information about possible abuse.**

**Respond** - respond to the child only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer the matter. Use open questions e.g. anything else to tell me? Do not interrogate or ask leading questions- this may invalidate your evidence and the child's in any later court proceedings. Do not criticise

the perpetrator- the child may love this person and reconciliation may be possible. Explain what you have to do next and to whom you have to talk.

**Record** - make notes at the time and write these up as soon as possible afterwards. Note the time, date, place, people present as well as what *is seen and* said. Record key phrases/words used, noticeable non-verbal behaviour and any physical injuries. Under no circumstances should a child be photographed or a child's clothing removed. Do not destroy original notes.

**Report** - refer the matter to the Designated Teacher. Respect confidentiality i.e. the matter should only be discussed on a need to know basis.

## **7. Procedures for Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse.**

### **7.1 How a Parent can make a Complaint**

We aim to work closely with parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of their child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern they can talk to the Class Teacher/Year Head, the Designated Teacher for child protection or the Principal. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Public Protection Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in **Appendix 2**.

### **7.2 Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff including volunteers**

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 Social Services- but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher, discuss the matter with her, and make full notes.

These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The Designated Teacher will decide whether in the best interest of the child the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. He/she will discuss the matter with the Principal and may also seek advice or clarification from the Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection or from Social Services (Gateway Team). Where it is evident that a young person has been or is at risk of being abused and/or a criminal offence may have been committed then the school must make a referral.

Referrals to Social Services will be made by telephone in the first instance and within 24 hours will be followed by the completion of a UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form. If a referral is made a copy of the UNOCINI referral form should be sent to the Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection. A copy of the UNOCINI form will be placed in the school's child protection file.

This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in **Appendix 3**.

### **7.3 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff or a Volunteer**

When 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. If the complaint is against the Principal then the Designated Teacher should be informed and he/she will inform the

Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority. The procedure as outlined in **Appendix 4** will be followed in keeping with current Department of Education guidance (DE Circular 2015/13).

## **8. Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Other Social Services Meetings**

The Designated Teacher or Principal may be invited to attend an initial and review Child Protection Case Conferences, core group or family support planning meetings convened by the Health & Social Care Trust. They will provide a written report which will be compiled following consultation with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored and supported in accordance with their child protection plan.

## **9. Consent from Pupils and Parents**

Prior to making a referral to Social Services the consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.

In circumstances where the consent of the parent/carer and/or the young person has been sought and is withheld we will consider and where possible respect their wishes. However our primary consideration must be the safety and welfare of the child and we will make a referral in cases where consent is withheld if we believe on the basis of the information available that it is in the best interests of the child/young person to do so.

## **10. 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.

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 safeguarding school. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide direct or indirect support to this child and family.

This information will be treated like any other child protection information as per DE Circular 2020/07. It 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 the online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency.

## **11. Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis. Should a child transfer to another school whilst there are current child protection concerns we will share these concerns with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school.

## **12. Record Keeping**

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher and Principal have access to them. In accordance with DE policy on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored until the child is 30 years old.

## **13. Safeguarding in the Curriculum**

The school seeks to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Furthermore, the pupil planner includes information directing a pupil on how to seek help, advice and support within the school and from external agencies and professionals.

## **14. Vetting Procedures**

All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in the School are vetted /supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

## **15. Code Of Conduct For all Staff Paid Or Unpaid**

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the child and young people in their charge must be above reproach.

## **16. Staff Training**

When new staff or volunteers start at the school they are briefed on the school's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and given copies of these policies. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and annual refresher training. The Principal, Designated Teacher, Chair of the Board of Governors and Designated Governor for Child Protection will also attend child protection training courses specific to their roles which is provided by the Education Authority's Child Protection Support Service for Schools.

## **17. Monitoring and Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Designated Teachers for Child Protection and approved every 2 years by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. It will be implemented through the school's staff induction and training programme and as part of day to day practice. Compliance with the policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and periodically by the School's Safeguarding Team.

**Date of Next Review: August 2023**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chair, Board of Governors

Date \_February 2023\_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 1

## The School Safeguarding Team

### Roles & Responsibilities

#### 1. Chair of the Board of Governors

The Chair of the Board of Governors is responsible for:

- Ensuring that a Child Protection policy is in place and that a safeguarding ethos is maintained in the school.
- Ensuring that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- Ensuring that Governors receive relevant training in Child Protection and Recruitment and Selection.
- Assuming lead responsibility in the management of a complaint/allegation against the School Principal.
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive regular updates in relation to child protection activity including a full written annual report.

#### 2. Designated Governor for Child Protection.

The Designated Governor is responsible for advising the Governors on matters related to child protection including the child protection policy, reports to Governors, the recruitment, selection and vetting of staff and the role of the Designated Teachers.

#### 3. Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all relevant DENI guidance in relation to child protection and safeguarding in particular "*Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection*"(1999) is implemented within the school.
- Enabling the Board of Governors fulfil their Child Protection duties by keeping them informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to child protection and ensuring the inclusion of child protection activities on their agenda.
- Maintaining and securely storing the *School Record of Child Abuse Complaints* and to make it available at least annually to the Board of Governors.
- The appointment of suitable staff to posts (teaching and non-teaching) within the school and the appointment of suitable teaching staff to the roles of Designated and Deputy Teacher for Child Protection.
- Ensuring that parents and pupils receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Complaints Procedures every 2 years.
- Managing child protection concerns relating to staff.

#### 4. Designated Teacher for Child Protection

Every school is required to appoint a Designated Teacher with responsibility for Child Protection. Because of its size, Holy Cross College has appointed two Designated Teachers – one for Key Stage 3 and one for Key Stages 4/5. Both are members of the Safeguarding Team carrying out the following duties:

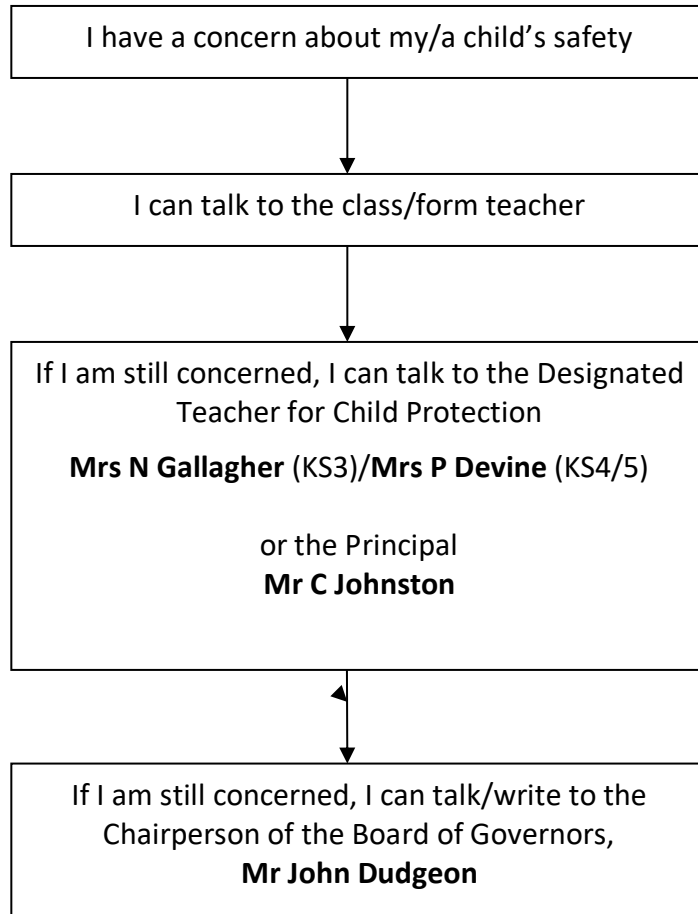
- Providing child protection training for all teaching and non-teaching staff (whole school training) to be delivered a minimum of once every two years.



- Taking lead responsibility for the development and annual review of the school's child protection policy.
- Promoting a child protection ethos in the school.
- Acting as a point of contact for staff (and parents) in relation to child abuse concerns.
- Liaison with the Principal and Education Authority's Designated Officers for Child Protection in cases of suspected Child Abuse.
- Making referrals to other agencies, with the Principal's knowledge.
- Maintaining and securely storing appropriate child protection records.
- Attending child protection case conferences and other relevant case planning meetings where appropriate and practicable.
- Providing an annual report to the Governors on child protection activity.

## Appendix 2

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



**At any time a parent can talk to a social worker at the Gateway Team (Western Trust)**

Tel: 028 71314 090

**or the PSNI at the Public Protection Unit**

Tel: 999 (Emergency) or 101 (Non-Urgent)

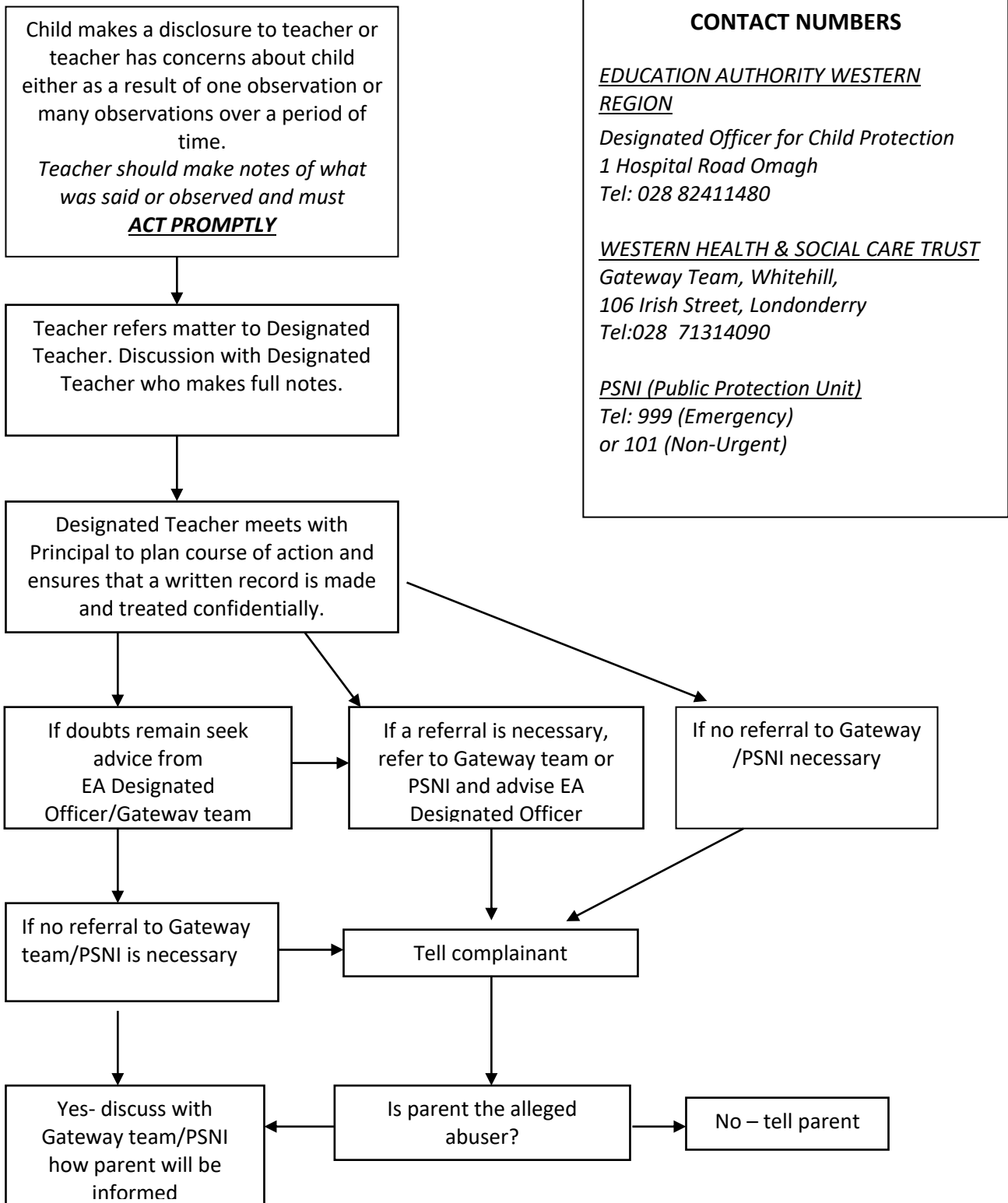
**or Young Minds Parents' Helpline**

Tel. 0808 802 5544

[www.youngminds.org.uk/parents](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/parents)

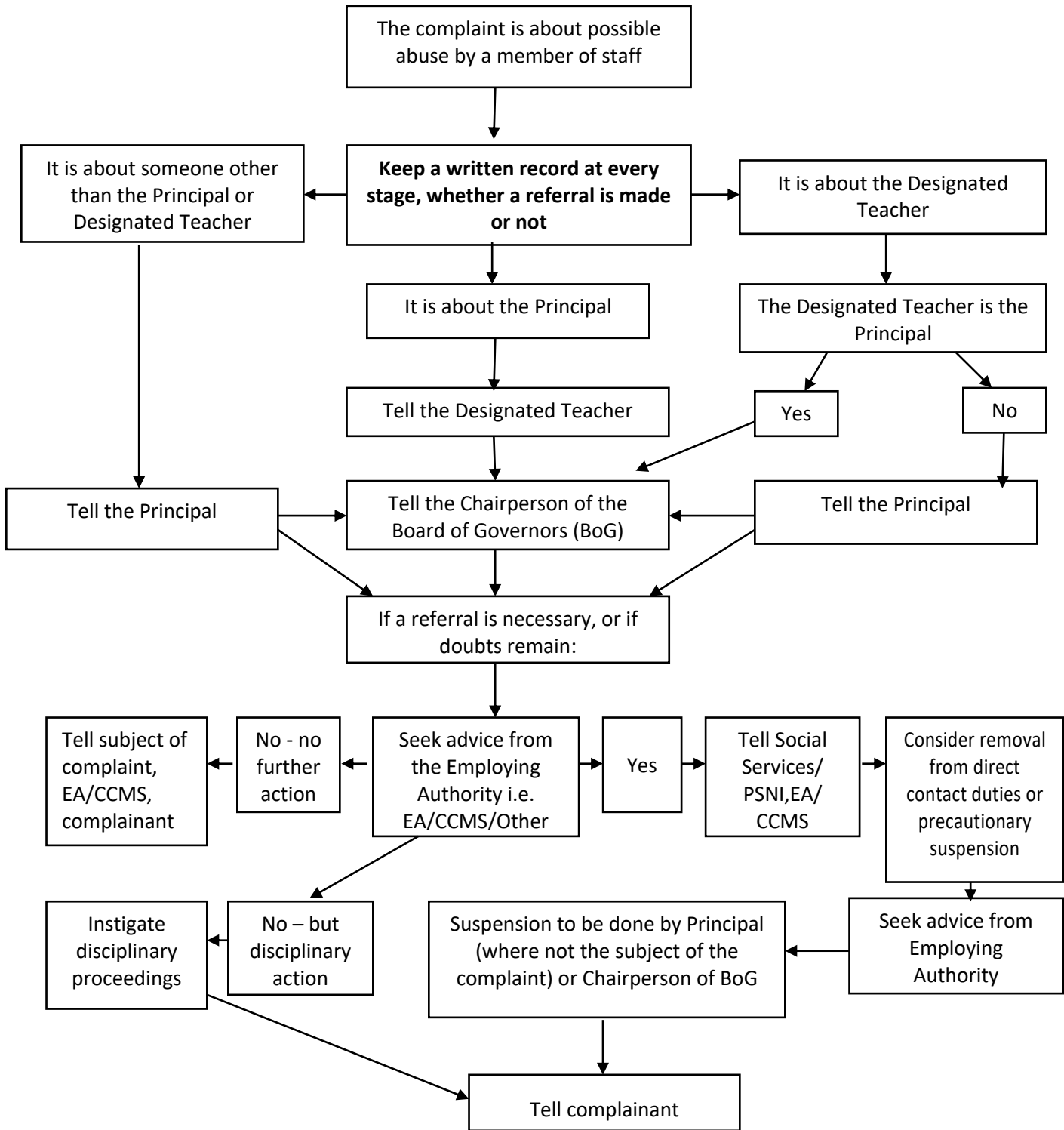
### Appendix 3

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



## Appendix 4

### Procedure where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school's staff.



EA - Education Authority; CCMS - Catholic Council for Maintained Schools