

CHILD **PROTECTION** **POLICY**

NAÍScoil ÉADAIN MHÓIR

September 2020

- **Chair of the Board of Governors** – Deaglán Ó Mocháin
- **Designated Governor for Child Protection** - Carol Nic Conamara
- **Deputy Designated Governor for Child Protection** – Deaglán Ó Mocháin
- **Designated teacher in Naíscoil** – Corey Hanna
- **Principal** – Mary Nic Ailín
- **Designated Teacher** – Alicia O Kane
- **Deputy Designated Teacher** – Corey Hanna

1. Child Protection Ethos

We in Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir, have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care. 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 encouraged to reach their full potential. All staff, both 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 Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance “Pastoral Care in Schools- Child Protection” (DENI Circular 99/10) and the Area Child Protection Committees’ Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

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 that 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. This policy therefore compliments and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Drug Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Addressing Bullying Policy
- Educational Visits
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Care of children in the sun
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- E-Safety Policy
- Intimate Care

- Managing Critical Incidents Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing a copy should contact the School Office or visit the school website at www.gaelscoileadainmhoir.com

4. School Safeguarding Team

- **Chair of the Board of Governors** – Deaglán Ó Mocháin
- **Designated Governor for Child Protection** - Carol Nic Conamara
- **Deputy Designated Governor for Child Protection** – Deaglán Ó Mocháin
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- **Deputy Designated Teacher** – Corey Hanna

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The Designated Teacher for Child Protection and Safeguarding

The designated teacher and deputy designated teacher must:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and roles of all personnel.
- Organise training for all staff (annual whole school training).
- Lead in the development of the school’s Child Protection Policy.
- Act as a point of contact for staff and parents.
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents.
- Make referrals to Social Services Gateway team or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate.
- Liaise with the Southern Education & Library Board’s Designated Officers for Child Protection.
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns.
- Keep the School Principal informed.
- Provide a written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection.
- Ensure that the Child Protection notice-board is up to date.

5.2 The Principal

The Principal must ensure that:

- DENI 1999 / 10 is implemented within the school.
- That a designated teacher and deputy are appointed.
- That all staff receive child protection training.
- That all staff, working in both paid and voluntary capacities are vetted in accordance to DE regulations.
- That all necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner.
- That the Chairman of the Board of Governors (and, when appropriate, the Board of Governors) is kept informed.
- That child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors' meetings and termly updates & annual report are provided.
- That the school child protection policy is reviewed annually and that parents and pupils receive a summary of this policy at least once every year.
- That confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.
- That all groups using the school premises in the evening for community activities are provided with and follow the guidance contained in the school Child Protection policy.
- That all persons, both paid and unpaid, who are involved in community run afterschool activities have undergone appropriate vetting checks through Access NI.
- That copies of Access NI enhanced check certificates or reference numbers (EA) are held in the school for all persons involved in community afterschool activities, if those persons are to be in contact with children under the age of 18 during their community activities.

5.3 The Designated Governor for Child Protection

The Designated Governor will provide the child protection lead in order to advise the Governors on:

- The role of the designated teachers.
- The content of child protection policies.
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school.
- The content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report.
- Recruitment, selection and vetting of staff.

5.4 The Chair of the Board of Governors

The Chair of the Board of Governors must:

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment.
- Ensure that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy.

- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment & selection training provided by the Education Authority Child Protection Support Service for Schools, the Education Authority Governor Support and Human Resource departments.
- Ensure that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal.
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive termly updates and a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity.
- Ensure that the guidelines as laid out in the 'Community Use of Schools' circular has been implemented by the Principal in the case of all community afterschool activities.

5.5 Other Members of School Staff

Staff in school see children over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and hear allegations of abuse.

Remember the 5 Rs: Receive, Reassure, Respond, Record and Refer

The member of staff must:

- refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teacher for Child Protection;
- listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief and support the child,
- act promptly,
- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the **actual words** of the child (**Appendix 1**)
- Avail of whole school training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children,
- **Not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures,
- **Not** investigate and **Not** ask leading questions.

In addition, the Class Teacher should:

- Keep the Designated Teacher/Principal informed about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or bullying, concerns about home conditions including disclosures of domestic violence.

5.6 Parents

Parents should play their part in Child Protection 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 situation;
- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, or those designated to do so, intends to pick up the child after school; (Ref: Policy on Collection of Children)

- letting the school know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home;
- keeping the school informed of any changes in family circumstances which may impact on the emotional well-being of the child, or which may alter the custodial arrangements or persons with parental responsibility for the child.
- familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Addressing Bullying, Positive Behaviour, Internet Safety and Child Protection Policies;
- raising concerns they have in relation to their child with the school.

5.7 The Board of Governors

Board of Governors must ensure that:

- the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy
- relevant Child Protection training is kept up-to-date by at least one governor and a record kept of the same,
- confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to an entire Board of Governors on a need-to-know basis.

6. What Is Child Abuse?

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005). 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.

6.1 Definition of Abuse

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. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.

6.2 Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the

If it comes to the attention of school staff that domestic abuse is or may be a factor for a child/young person, this information will be passed to the Designated / Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with Social Services

Child Sexual Exploitation

This is a form of sexual abuse in which a child or young person is exploited, coerced and/or manipulated into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something they need or desire and/or for the gain of a third person.

In the case where we become aware of a young person below the age of consent engaging in sexual activity, the Designated Teacher will be duty bound to share this information with Social Services.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation is an increasingly common form of abuse, with the increase in cultural diversity within our community. FGM is a collective term for all procedures involving the partial or total removal of external female genitalia, for cultural, religious or any other non-medical/ therapeutic reasons. FGM is illegal in this country and it is also illegal to remove a girl from this country and take her to another country for the procedure to be carried out. Therefore, FGM is considered to be a form of Child Abuse and should be dealt with in line with Child Protection procedures for any other types of abuse.

Indicators that FGM may be about to take place:

- A girl having difficulty walking or standing
- A girl who spends long periods of time at the toilet
- A girl who spends long periods of time away from the classroom because of bladder/menstrual problems
- Prolonged or repeated absences from school or college
- Withdrawal or depression when a girl returns to school after a prolonged periods of absence
- Reluctance to undergo or be permitted to undergo normal routine medical examinations

Actions in case of Disclosure/Referral:

As FGM is a form of Child Abuse, it should be dealt with in line with the schools Child Protection policy and a referral be made to social services if a case of FGM is suspected to be imminent or to have already taken place.

FGM is illegal, therefore the PSNI & Social Services may launch a joint investigation.

Schools are advised not to contact the girl's family or to reveal that investigations regarding FGM are taking place- this may put the girl at greater risk.

Counselling and ongoing support should be arranged for the girl and for any other female members of the family who may be at risk.

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

We will take seriously any concerns which are raised about a pupil in our school who has self-harmed and/or has expressed suicidal thoughts. The Designated / Deputy Designated teacher will immediately follow the school's child protection procedures.

6.3 Signs and symptoms of abuse ~ Possible Indicators

Physical Abuse

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
Unexplained bruises – in various stages of healing – grip marks on arms; slap marks; human bite marks; welts; bald spots; unexplained/untreated burns; especially cigarette burns (glove like); unexplained fractures; lacerations; or abrasions; untreated injuries; bruising on both sides of the ear – symmetrical bruising should be treated with suspicion; injuries occurring in a time pattern e.g. every Monday	Self destructive tendencies; aggressive to other children; behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive); appears frightened or cowed in presence of adults; improbable excuses to explain injuries; chronic runaway; uncomfortable with physical contact; come to school early or stays last as if afraid to be at home; clothing inappropriate to weather – to hide part of body; violent themes in art work or stories

Emotional Abuse

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
Well below average in height and weight; “failing to thrive”; poor hair and skin; alopecia; swollen extremities i.e. icy cold and swollen hands and feet; recurrent diarrhoea, wetting and soiling; sudden speech disorders; signs of self mutilation; signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness); extremes of physical, mental and emotional development (e.g. anorexia, vomiting, stooping).	Apathy and dejection; inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations; rocking/head banging; inability to play; indifference to separation from family indiscriminate attachment; reluctance for parental liaison; fear of new situation; chronic runaway; attention seeking/needing behaviour; poor peer relationships.

Neglect

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Looks very thin, poorly and sad; constant hunger; lack of energy; untreated medical problems; special needs of child not being met; constant tiredness; inappropriate dress; poor hygiene; repeatedly unwashed; smelly; repeated accidents, especially burns.	Tired or listless (falls asleep in class); steals food; compulsive eating; begging from class friends; withdrawn; lacks concentration; misses school medicals; reports that no carer is at home; low self-esteem; persistent non-attendance at school; exposure to violence including unsuitable videos.

Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs; bruises or bleeding in genital or anal areas; torn, stained or bloody underclothes; chronic ailments such as recurrent abdominal pains or headaches; difficulty in walking or sitting; frequent urinary infections; avoidance of lessons especially PE, games, showers; unexplained pregnancies where the identity of the father is vague; anorexia/gross over-eating.	What the child tells you; Withdrawn; chronic depression; excessive sexual precociousness; seductiveness; children having knowledge beyond their usual frame of reference e.g. young child who can describe details of adult sexuality; parent/child role reversal; over concerned for siblings; poor self esteem; self devaluation; lack of confidence; peer problems; lack of involvement; massive weight change; suicide attempts (especially adolescents); hysterical/angry outbursts; lack of emotional control; sudden school difficulties e.g. deterioration in school work or behaviour; inappropriate sex play; repeated attempts to run away from home; unusual or bizarre sexual themes in children's art work or stories; vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation; promiscuity; exposure to pornographic material.

7.0 Procedures for making complaints in relation to child abuse

7.1 How a Parent can make a Complaint

At Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the 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 or the Principal / Designated teacher for child protection. 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** and will be displayed in a prominent area within the school. Parents can contact the Ombudsman at any stage of this process as per flowchart.

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

Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a child, they should not investigate – this is a matter for Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher and full notes should be made. 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 and principal will decide, whether, in the best interest 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 there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately. The designated teacher and our designated Governor will be contacted for advice at this stage.

The designated teacher may also consult with the Education Authority's Designated Officer for Child Protection or Social Services Gateway Team before a referral is made. During consultation with the Designated Officer the child's details will be shared. 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 and a referral needs to be made, the designated teacher will telephone Social Services Gateway Team. He/she will also notify the Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be completed and forwarded to the Gateway team with a copy sent to the Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection.

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

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal and the Chair of the Board of Governors must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal / Designated teacher). If a complaint is made against the Principal (Acting Designated Teacher), the Deputy Designated Teacher will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will ensure that necessary action is taken. If the Principal has concerns that a child may be at immediate risk from a volunteer, the services of this volunteer will be terminated immediately.

Where the matter is referred to Social Services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

Child protection procedures as outlined in **Appendix 4** will be followed in keeping with current Department of Education guidance. Names and contact numbers are also detailed in the appendix.

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.

Do:	Do not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Listen to what the child says ❖ Assure the child they are not at fault ❖ Explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret ❖ Document exactly what the child says using his/her exact words ❖ Remember not to promise the child confidentiality ❖ Stay calm ❖ Listen ❖ Accept ❖ Reassure ❖ Explain what you are going to do ❖ Record accurately ❖ Seek support for yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ask leading questions. ❖ Put words into the child's mouth ❖ Ignore the child's behaviour ❖ Remove any clothing ❖ Panic ❖ Promise to keep secrets ❖ Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily ❖ Delay ❖ Start to investigate ❖ Do Nothing

8. Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences and Core Group Meetings

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher or Principal may be invited to attend initial and review Child Protection Case Conferences and/or core group 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 the child protection plan.

9. 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. Where abuse is suspected schools have a legal duty to refer to the Statutory Agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

10. Record Keeping

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the child or young person and are only accessible by the Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teacher and Principal.

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.

11. Vetting Procedures

All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in the school are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance. Relevant policy will be followed at all times.

12. 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. The school's code of conduct is available on request.

13. Staff Training

The Designated and Deputy Designated Officers and Designated Governor for Child Protection & Safeguarding are training every 3 years by the Child Protection team at Education Authority. An annual audit is carried out each year to identify those who need to update / refresh their training and this is sent to the Education Authority Child Protection team, who in turn facilitate training as required. All school staff, both teaching and non-teaching receives 'in-house' training on Child Protection and Safeguarding at the beginning of the school year – facilitated by the Designated Officer. All newly appointed staff and volunteers will receive Child Protection awareness training and copies of all associated policies as part of their staff induction.

14. The Preventative Curriculum

In the classroom, regular PDMU lessons and Circle Time sessions are used as a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self-confidence, respect and sensitivity among classmates.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through school assemblies and there is a permanent child protection notice board in the main hall, computer suits, naíscoil entrance, school office and staffroom which provides advice and displays child helpline numbers. A flow diagram of how a parent may make a complaint is also on display. An enlarged flow diagram for a teacher allegation is also on display. We also provide information for parents on local support services which they can avail of.

Our school is a caring school and that ethos permeates everything we do. All staff make a conscious effort to treat our pupils in a caring and sensitive manner, in the hope that we would gain their faith and trust in us as carers. In turn, we hope that our pupils feel comfortable in disclosing to a staff member, if they are worried or concerned about a particular incident or about their general well-being and welfare.

All other opportunities to participate in events to raise awareness of Child Protection and Safeguarding will be utilised, if and when they arise.

14. Monitoring and Evaluation

A copy of this policy will be provided to the parents of all children when they commence Naíscoil and Rang a 1. A summary document will also be provided to all parents on an annual basis. The Board of Governors, in conjunction with staff will review the policy annually and amend it to suit the needs of the school as it grows in size, with particular reference to personnel and those with various responsibilities. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the child protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Teacher.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

Date of Policy Review:

Signed:

_____ (Designated Teacher)

_____ (Chair of Board of Governors)

Appendix 1

Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir

CONFIDENTIAL

NOTE OF CONCERN

CHILD PROTECTION RECORDS – REPORTS TO DESIGNATED TEACHER

Name of pupil:
Year Group:
Date & Time of Incident/Disclosure:
Nature & Description of Concern:
Parties involved including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom:
Action taken at the time:
Details of any advice sought from where and when:
Any further action taken:
Written Report passed to Designated Teacher: Yes: No: If 'No' state reason:

Date and time of report passed to the designated teacher:

Written Note from staff member placed on the child's child protection file.

Yes: No:

If 'No' State reason:

Name of Staff member making the report: _____

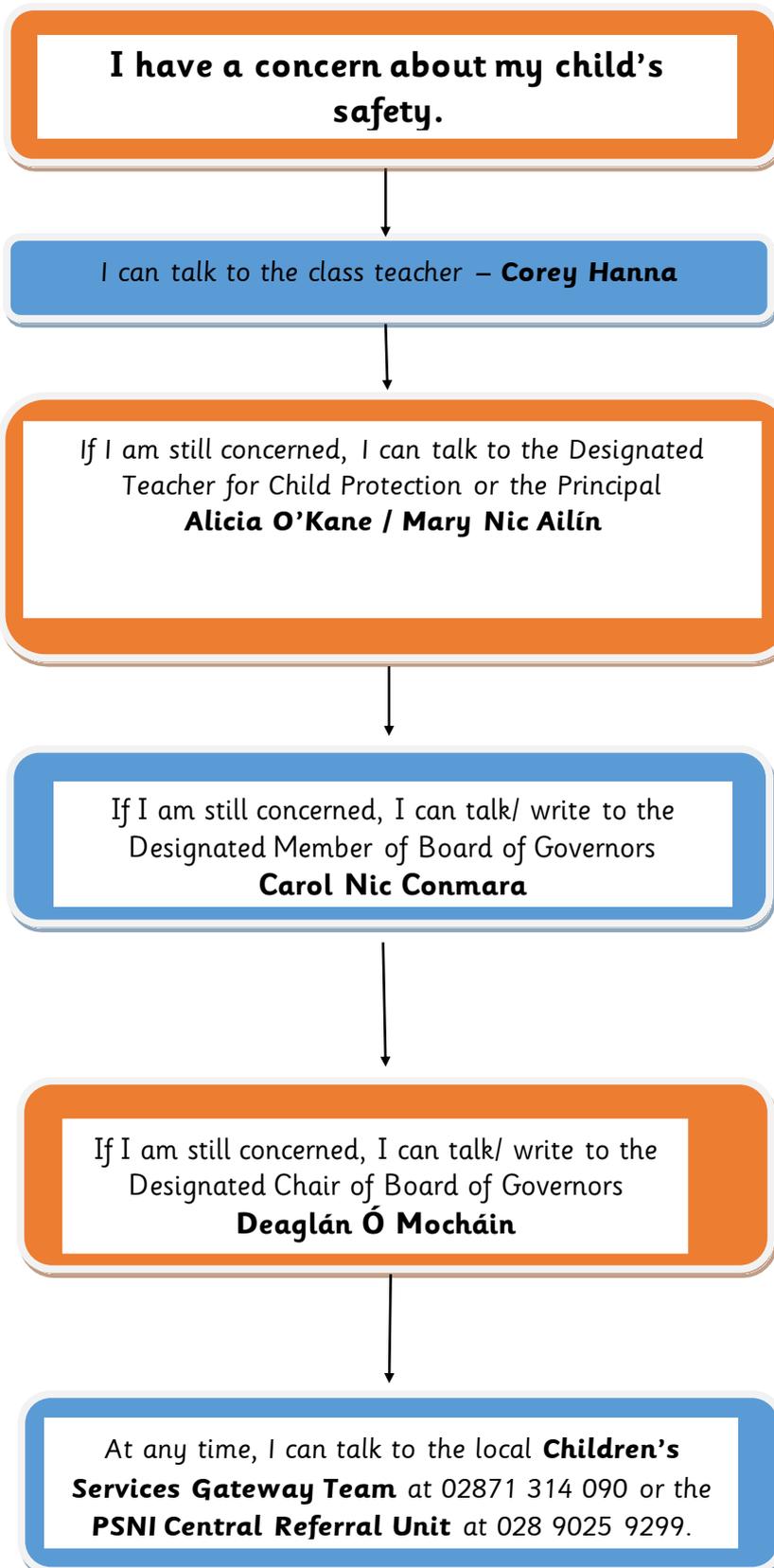
Signature of staff member: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Designated Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2

How a Parent can make a Complaint

If a parent has a potential child protection concern:



*** If you have escalated your concern as set out in the flowchart, and are of the view that it has not been addressed satisfactorily, you may revert to the school's complaints policy. This policy should culminate in the option for you to contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) who has the legislative power to investigate your complaint. For further information regarding this process please refer to Annex B.**

Appendix 3

Procedure When There Are Concerns for the Welfare of a Child

Staff:

Corey Hanna
Sinéad Mc Laughlin

Member of staff completes the Note of Concern on what has been observed or shared and must ACT PROMPTLY. Source of concern is notified that the school will follow up appropriately on the issues raised.

Designated staff member for Child Protection:

Corey Hanna (Naíscoil Éadain Mhóir)

Staff member discusses concerns with the Designated Teacher (Alicia O'Kane) and provides note of concern.

Designated Teacher consults with the **Principal** (Mary Nic Ailín) before deciding upon action to be taken, always taking care to avoid undue delay. If required, advice may be sought from a CPSS officer.

Child Protection referral is required

Designated Teacher seeks consent of the parent/carer unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm then telephones the Children's Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI if a child is at immediate risk. She submits a completed UNOCINI referral form within 24 hours.

Designated Teacher clarifies/discusses concern with parent/carers and decides if a child protection referral is or is not required.

Child Protection referral is not required

School may consider other options including monitoring the situation within an agreed timescale; signposting or referring the child/parent/carers to appropriate support services such as the Children's Services Gateway Team or local Family Support Hub with parental consent (where

Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed as to the action taken. The Designated Teacher will maintain a written record of all decisions and actions taken and ensure that this record is appropriately and securely stored.

Procedure When a Complaint of Possible Abuse by a Member of Staff is Made.

