

**ST. PATRICK’S PRIMARY SCHOOL, MULLANASKEA**

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Date Reviewed October 2022**

**Chair of BOG \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Principal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Next Date to be Reviewed Oct. 2023**

**ST. PATRICK’S PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

***INTRODUCTION***

***Child Protection Ethos***

***We in St. Patrick’s P.S have a responsibility for the safeguarding and child protection, 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, should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should be familiar with St. Patrick’s P.S Child Protection Policy and EA Guidelines, including procedures of reporting concerns to the Principal, Vice-principal or Designated Team who immediately act on it in accordance with St. Patrick’s P.S Procedures for reporting child abuse. All incidents to be reported to the principal immediately or as soon as possible, unless he/she is indicated as being involved. 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.***

***Equality and Inclusion***

Equality and inclusion are key principles in our school as it is made up of pupils from many different backgrounds, nationalities and experiences, each who have a wide range of skills, abilities and interests. Individuality and difference is recognised and indeed celebrated in the school particularly through ‘individual improvement’.

‘Inclusion is about the quality of children’s experience; how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school’.

(Removing barriers to Achievement 2004)

It is key in this policy that all in St. Patrick’s feel special for whom they are and that they feel free from any form of injustice or prejudice. It is essential that all pupils feel cared for and safe as equal members of the school community. All pupils have the right to full entitlement and access to high quality education within a broad balanced curriculum. Each pupil no matter how they differ from others should feel valued and are offered curricular, pastoral and extra-curricular opportunities that allow pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills so ensuring progress, success and self-confidence.

***Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection***

Effective Safeguarding Activity will:

* Promote the welfare for the child and young person
* Prevent harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate, timely intervention: and
* Protect children and young people from harm when this is required

The welfare of children and young people must be promoted and they must be given every opportunity to develop to their full potential, free from harm through abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in N.I., version 2 Aug 2017

The principles and philosophy which underpin our child protection service to children are those set out in the ’United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’ (UK agreement in 1991) and enshrined in the Children (NI) Order 1995 (effective from November 1996), “Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in N.I” (DOH 2017), the DoE (N.I) guidance “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools” (DENI Circular 2017/04) and the Safeguarding Board for NI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017) the Area Child Protection Committees Regional Policy and Procedures (2005), Safeguarding Board Act NI (2011).

In particular, the principle we support is that every child has the fundamental right to be safe from harm and with proper care by those looking after them given to their physical, emotional, spiritual well-being.

The other principles we practise under are:

* The child’s welfare must always be paramount; this overrides all other considerations. Where a child is disabled or has special needs these must be taken into consideration.
* A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is a conflict, the child’s interests must always come first.
* Children have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions, which may affect their lives. Where a child has a disability, specialist assistance should be sought to achieve this.
* Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters that affect their family.
* Actions taken to protect the child (including investigation) should not in themselves be abusive by causing the child unnecessary distress or further harm.
* Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation; the child’s needs should be considered in the context of the family. Agencies actions must be considered and well informed so that they are sensitive to and take account of the child’s gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race, and any special needs.
* Where it is necessary to protect the child from further abuse, alternatives which do not involve moving the child and which minimise disruption of the family should be explored.

All agencies concerned with the protection of children must work together in the best interests of children and their families. Each agency must have an understanding of each other’s functions, responsibilities and priorities in relation to children and commit to maintaining effective communication.

This Child Protection Policy is one of a suite of safeguarding policies and sets out clearly the procedures to be followed in cases of suspected abuse, drawing on the guidance provided by the Department, EA, the former DHSSPS, the Dept. of Health, the appropriate Employing Authority and the Safeguarding Board for N.I. and all current and respective DoE Circulars (2016/20, 2016/26, 2016/27, 2017/13 and 2018/07)

**Other Relevant Policies**

Pastoral Care, Positive Behaviour Policy, Anti Bullying, Keeping Safe policy, Code

of Conduct, Complaints policy, Data Protection Policy, Educational Visits,

Reasonable Force/Safe Handling, Special Needs, Health and Safety, Intimate Care,

Internet Safety, E- Safety, RSE, Alcohol, Drugs, Nutrition, Medicines, Staff

Emotional Health and Well Being, Attendance, Use of Mobile phone/Cameras,

Remote Teaching and Learning, Acceptable Use, Mobile Phone, Privacy Notice, Record Management

Policy, Whistleblowing Policy.

**These Policies are available to parents and any parent wishing to have a copy should contact the School office or visit the school website at www.stpatricksmullanaskea.com**

**School Safeguarding Team**

Chair of the Board of Governors - Fr. Halton

Principal / Deputy Designated Teacher - Ms L. O’Neill

Designated Teacher -Mrs C. O’Connor

Deputy Designated B.of G – Mrs Selina Wright

This team and our safeguarding policies will create effective safeguarding activities

which will

* Promote the welfare for the child and young person
* Prevent harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate, timely intervention: and
* Protect children and young people from harm when this is required

The welfare of children and young people must be promoted and they must be given every opportunity to develop their full potential, free from harm through abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Co-operating to Safeguard children and Young people in NI, version 2 August 2017

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The roles of the Safeguarding Team are summarised in **Appendix 1**

**Parents**

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.

Parents can play their part in safeguarding by:

* Informing 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 e.g change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility
* Telephoning the school about any absences so the school is reassured as to the well-being of the child.
* Informing school when anyone other than themselves are collecting the child after school.
* Familiarise themselves with the schools safeguarding policies sent home.
* Reporting to school office when visiting school.
* Sharing any concerns they may have in relation to their child.

**Other members of Staff**

* Members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures initially to designated teacher for CP or to the Principal /Deputy Designated.
* Class teachers should complete the note of concern such as: 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.

A pro-forma for reporting a concern or disclosure is included in Appendix 8.

* **Staff should not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their

disclosures, should not investigate nor should they ask leading questions.

If a member of staff does not feel that their concerns are not 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 CP, Principal, EA Designated Officer for CP or to Child Services.

# *Safeguarding and the Preventative Curriculum*

The statutory personal development curriculum requires school to give specific attention to pupils’ emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age –appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours.

The following points are part of a guide for teachers with confidentiality concerns about child protection.

The school has developed and provides a ‘Child Protection Ethos’ and a Preventative Curriculum. We offer children an alternative model to violent or abusive behaviour and alternative methods of responding. We aim to involve the whole school in creating a ‘Listening School’. We actively encourage pupil participation in decision making in our school through our School Council.

DE Circular 2014/14

The school offers protection on two levels:

* Immediate protection – creating a listening environment that makes it easier for children to share their concerns through the taught programme, good supervision and two way communication between pupils, staff, parents and the community.
* Long term protection, enhancing self- esteem and encouraging pro social skills, breaking the cycle of abusive behaviour.
* The Board of Governors ensures that the school curriculum includes: -
* Programme for pupils on personal protection.
* At Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2, the children’s welfare is paramount and child protection within the curriculum is an integral part of PDMU.

E.g. Road safety Say No to strangers Drugs Anti -Bullying

NSPCC Keeping Safe, E-Safety, etc

* We offer a supportive environment to children who have been victims of abuse. We recognise that all children are vulnerable.

***Safe Recruitment Measures***

(Ref - **Appendix 2**)

The Board of Governors adheres to safe recruitment practices in relation to the employment of people to work with the pupils of St. Patrick’s P.S., Mullanaskea as outlined in the DE circulars 2006/06, 2006/07, 2006/08, 2006/09 & 2006/25:

* Recruitment Advertising contains prominent child protection statements
* Applicants are required to produce photographic ID & the names of 2 referees, including a referee from their last post (where they were working with children / young people) at the time of application
* Successful applicants are required to produce proof of claimed qualifications i.e. original qualifications or by confirmation of the accrediting authority if originals have been lost.
* Successful applicants must also have completed an Access N.I form (Application for a criminal background check & suitability to work with children) & they will only be employed when the pre-employment check has been completed & approved by the PSNI. Ref: DE Circulars 2008/03, 2012/19, 2013/01
* Only substitute teachers on the NISTR will be employed as substitute cover as set out in the DE circulars 2006/07 & 2008/10
* The Principal & Board of Governors have been trained on recruitment processes that take in to account the importance of Child Protection. Additionally, one member of the staff recruitment & selection interview panel (Fr. Halton) has been trained by the Education Authority on the importance of Child Protection issues in relation to Selection & Recruitment (DE circular 2006/08).
* Access NI checks will be carried out prior to the appointment of any new governor from 1st January, 2007 through CCMS / Education Authority.

We also ensure that persons beyond the school staff who are invited to be involved as helpers/leaders on trips, residential visits, or other out of school activities are subject to vetting procedures in keeping with current arrangements for the care and protection of young people

**Emergencies / Exceptions**

It is accepted that temporary replacements for non-teaching staff may have to be made in emergencies before a check can be carried out. Additionally, there will be circumstances where others will have to enter the school building to: make repairs, make deliveries, or visitors for a meeting who will not be checked. Insuchcircumstances, staff will take all reasonable steps to ensure that;

* no visitors are left unsupervised with pupils,
* all visitors sign the visitor’s book whilst on the school premises.

As a general principle, the presence of un-vetted people around the school is recognised as ‘exceptional, short-term & controlled’ (DE Circular 2006/06)

**Visiting Teachers from Abroad**

Guidelines on obtaining criminal record information on citizens from other members of the European Union and a number of other countries (DE circular 2006/06) is followed in order to establish the suitability of visiting teachers from abroad prior to their proposed start date in our school.

**Code of Conduct for all Staff Paid or Unpaid**

(Ref – **Appendix 3**)

The Board of Governors ensures that the school has and follows the Code of Practice for the conduct of all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, towards the pupils attending the school. The Code of Practice covers all activities organised in and by the school, whether on school premises or elsewhere.

**Collection of pupils**

(Ref – **Appendix 4**)

The Board of Governors and staff are aware of the guidance for schools on parental responsibility (as set out in circular 1999/17) and parental rights under current legislation. The Board of Governors and Principal follow the guidance set out in DE circular 1999/17 with regard to any approaches made about parental responsibility rights, how parental responsibility can be verified, how the position on exercise of rights can be established and approaches to be taken where those with parental responsibility disagree about an educational decision.

Staff are also aware of adults who have parental responsibility for the pupils in our school. Staff must ensure that pupils are collected only by those adults who have parental responsibility or those adults nominated by those who have parental responsibility on the ‘Permission to Collect Pupils’ form

# Definitions and potential signs and symptoms of Child abuse including CSE and domestic violence

# 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:

* Sexual abuse
* Physical abuse
* Emotional abuse
* Neglect; and
* Exploitation

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. The main types of abuse as well as their physical and behavioural indicators are included in **Appendix 5.**

**Bullying** is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff are aware of the forms of bullying (including Cyber-bullying) and staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring. All staff will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the person displaying bullying behaviours. E.g.(Ref: Anti-Bullying Policy/ Positive Behaviour Policy/Keeping Safe Policy/Safe Use of the Internet/ Photograph Policy etc)

## Responding to Safeguarding and Child Protection Concerns

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. Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm.

In the event of a disclosure of child abuse, staff will:

* Receive - Listen to the child without shock or disbelief.
* Reassure – Reassure child you believe what is said but do not promise confidentiality.
* Respond – Ask only open-ended questions eg. Is there anything else?
* Record – Make notes- date, times, places. Record key phrases/words used, note nonverbal behaviour and any physical injuries. No photographs to be taken.
* Refer information to the Designated Teacher / Principal. Do not contact parents initially.

Designated Teacher/ Principal will do that as appropriate.

## Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse

## (Ref: Appendix 6)

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection is Mrs Ciara O’Connor. In her absence, Deputy Designated Teacher, Ms Louise O’Neill will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

How a Parent can make a Complaint

We aim to work closely with parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of their childs 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, the Designated teacher for CP 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 6**.

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

The designated teacher / Principal will as a matter of urgency plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record is made.

The Principal / designated teacher, will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services via Gateway Team. 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 parents will be informed immediately.

Verbal referrals to Social Services should be followed up within 24 hours on a completed UNOCINI.

The Principal may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Designated Officer from the Education Board, 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.

## Allegations against a member of staff

(Ref: **Appendix 7**)

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal / designated teacher (deputy designated teacher, if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply unless the complaint is about the designated teacher / principal or deputy designated teacher. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately. DE Circular 2015/13

## Allegations against the Principal/Designated teacher

(Ref: **Appendix 7**)

If a complaint is made against the Principal / the designated teacher, her deputy 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.

## Suspension from duties

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.

***Allegations against someone other than a member of school’s Staff***

(Ref: **Appendix 8**)

The complaint is about possible abuse by someone outside the school

* Keep a written record of complaint at all steps
* Tell the designated teacher / principal
* If the designated teacher / principal is unavailable, inform the deputy

designated teacher

* Is a referral necessary, or do doubts remain?
* Don’t know – consult /Board/CCMS/Social Services
* Yes – refer to Social Services/Police and tell EA/CCMS

## No - Discuss with Complainant in an age appropriate manner why no further action is deemed necessary.

DE Circular 2014/27

***Confidentiality and Record Keeping***

* Child Protection raises issues of confidentiality which should be clearly understood by all staff.
* Staff has a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies.
* If a child confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept a secret, it is important that the member of staff tells the child sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies for the child’s own sake. Within that context, the child should, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.
* Staff who receive information about children and their families in the course of their work should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts. Child protection records are kept securely locked in the principal’s office.

For reasons of confidentiality the only people who need to know about individual cases are:-

Designated teacher - Mrs Ciara O’Connor

Deputy Designated teacher - Ms Louise O’Neill

Child’s class teacher may also be made aware of relevant information in order to safeguard the child i.e. Child Protection Plan

## Record Keeping

All records, information and confidential notes are kept securely locked in the principal’s office. These only identify the child by their initials and date of birth. These records are kept separate from the pupil’s individual report.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the school’s disciplinary procedures, a summary is entered on a Record of Abuse Complaints. This entry which will contain details of the complaint, will be made available to the Board of Governors at least annually.

(Ref: **Appendix 9**– Note of Concern)

( Ref: **Appendix 10** –Notification of Suspected / Admitted / Known Child (ren) Abuse to Social Services)

## Staff In-Service Training

The school is committed to on-going in-service training for all staff. All staff have received general training on Child Protection and a record will be kept annually.

Designated Teacher has received up to date training.

The Deputy Designated Teacher has received up to date training.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Board of Governors have received training (including training in child protection issues relating to Selection & Recruitment).

School Staff have received training in Child Protection

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The school will update this Policy and Procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary, and review it annually.

### ***PROCEDURES***

At this school we recognise the four main responsibilities in the areas of Child Protection are

Prevention, Recognition, Response, Referral and confidentiality/record keeping.

Parents will be made aware of the schools responsibilities and procedures and we hope they will support

us in our practice.

### ***Responsibility of our School***

* All staff should be aware of procedures.
* There should be no undue delay in reporting concerns.
* If in any doubt contact the Designated Teacher.
* The child MUST be listened to and taken seriously.
* The child should not be asked to repeat the disclosure unnecessarily. (this is to prevent a child’s account to another professional’ e.g. Social Worker, becoming a “rehearsed version” of their actual account.)
* The Board Child Protection Team should be informed, when and where necessary -Godfrey Young, Martin Mc Quade or Marion Mc Bride.
* Referrals go through to Gateway in Whitehall (Rossdowney House).
* Where a child is already know to Social Services the Child Protection Teacher should make contact with the Families Named Social Worker. (These contact details should be kept updated on the child’s record).
* It is essential to avoid delay in sharing concerns about a child.
* When considered appropriate, seek medical attention.
* Take care not to compromise or accidentally destroy any evidence that there may be.
* All these principles and actions also apply to all people who visit, but are not permanently based in, schools.
* To maintain the Child Protection Register
* To keep all relevant agencies updated on what is happening.

## Sensitive issues

The curriculum programme provides the pupils with a general prevention and protection provision but sometimes this can not necessarily help an individual pupil deal with their own individual needs.

All staff in our school has reactive strategies in place for individual needs e.g. Bereavement, either

accidental or non-accidental; bullying and other sensitive issues where individual and specialised help is

needed. These cases are handled on a need to know basis within the school and are monitored very

closely to help the pupil integrate back into the school.

***Duty of the School***

This school recognises its legal duty to work with other agencies in protecting children from harm and

responding to abuse. Child protection issues will be addressed through the curriculum as appropriate,

especially through PDMU.

We ensure that bullying is identified and dealt with for the benefit and social development of all concerned. All pupils are encouraged to show respect for others and take responsibility for protecting themselves.

**Supporting Vulnerable Children.**

The school recognises that prevention of abuse or harm can also be addressed by the provision of supportive interventions with families. Many concerns regarding children may never reach the child protection threshold. Providing support, advice or (with the families consent) referral to supports has been clearly shown to reduce vulnerability, build family resources and support parenting capacity. The school will hold information on family support services and discuss these with parents when felt appropriate. Such services may also support parents to address children’s behaviours in a more constructive manner and support the schools’ ethos.

(see **Appendix 11**) for list of available services in the local area)

***Duty of Staff***

All staff (teaching and non-teaching) seek to adopt an open and accepting attitude towards pupils as part of their responsibility for pastoral care. Staff hope that parents and pupils feel free to talk about any concerns and see school as a safe place. Pupils’ worries and fears will be taken seriously if they seek help from a member of staff.

However, staff cannot guarantee confidentiality if concerns are such that referral must be made to the appropriate agencies in order to safeguard the child’s welfare.

Staff who observe injuries which appear to be non-accidental, or who are told anything significant by a pupil, must report their concerns to Mrs Ciara O’Connor who is the Child Protection Designated Teacher.

If staff have significant concerns about any pupil which may indicate physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, they must discuss these with the Child Protection Designate, Mrs Ciara O’Connor, who will contact the agencies responsible for investigation and child protection. School staff do not carry out investigations themselves, nor do they decide whether children have been abused.

That is a matter for the specialist agencies.

All staff are aware of the procedures for keeping a confidential written record of any

incidents

***Parents Role***

Parents are expected to help their children to behave in non-violent and non-abusive ways towards both

staff and other pupils. Parents will be informed if it was necessary to use minimal force to protect a pupil

from injury or to prevent a pupil from harming others.

Parents should always inform the school of any accidental bruising or other injuries that might otherwise be

misinterpreted. They should also inform the school of any changes in home circumstances, such as the

death of a member of the family, separation or divorce, that might lead to otherwise unexplained changes in

behaviour or characteristics.

Parents can feel confident that procedures are in place to ensure that all staff appointed have undergone procedures to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. All voluntary helpers undergo similar procedures including a police check.

If parents have any queries about the implementation of these procedures, they should contact the Principal in the first instance. All those involved, both pupils and staff, areentitled to a fair hearing.

If parents feel they require further information they should contact the school’s Educational Welfare Officer. The senior officer responsible for co-ordinating action on child protection in the Education Authority is Mr. Tony McGonigle (028 82 411477) or contact Ms. Diane Christie who is the Senior Management Officer / Child Protection Officer in the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (028) 71 261931. Parents can also contact the Duty Social Worker in Social Services at Rossdowney House (028) 71 314200.

A list of additional useful contact numbers are listed for parents’ convenience

**(Ref: Appendix 11).**

If Parents wish to raise a Child Protection Concern

**(Ref : Appendix 12)**

**RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

In St. Patrick’s, we seek to help our children grow and develop into healthy, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. One aspect of that growth is the development of the children’s ability to relate to others and have a positive understanding of their own sexuality.

Relationship and Sexuality Education is delivered throughout the curriculum, but most particularly through the programmes for Religious Education, ‘Alive O’ and Grow in Love.

A full R.S.E. Policy has been drawn up for the school.

Ref: DE circulars ( 2010/01, 2013/16, 2015/22)

**Supporting children in school through the COVID 19 Crisis**

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will continue to be a safe place for all children to attend and flourish. The Principal, Ms O’Neill will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow advice from the Public Health Agency on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of Covid-19.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will ensure that where we care for children of key workers and vulnerable children on site, appropriate support is in place for them.

**Physical, Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Pupils & Staff**

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea understands that negative experiences and distressing life events, such as those that may lead to the need to self-isolate at home and school closures, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. The school will provide additional wellbeing resources to parents.

For children returning to school after a period of absence, staff will be aware of the possible effects that this period may have had on pupils’ mental health. They will look out for behavioural signs, including pupils being fearful, withdrawn, aggressive, oppositional or excessively clingy, you help identify where support may be needed.

Where possible, St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will continue to offer our current support for pupil mental health for all pupils.

We will also signpost all pupils, parents/carers and staff to other resources to support good mental health at this time.

When setting expectations for pupils learning remotely and not attending school, teachers will bear in mind the potential impact of the current situation on both children’s and adult’s mental health. The staff of St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will be alert to mental health concerns in children who are at home, and act on these immediately, following our reporting procedures.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we are committed to supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our whole school community (children, staff, parents & carers). We recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing is just as important to our lives physical health.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we endeavour to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress. We aim to ensure that the children are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health, aiming to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to work in a proactive way to avoid problems arising. We do this by:

* Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands
* Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
* Promoting self-esteem, and ensuring children understand their importance in the world.
* Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks
* Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
* Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs
* Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience
* Developing an open culture where it’s normal to talk about mental health.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

* Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging
* Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making
* Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
* Promoting opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
* Promoting opportunities to reflect

Supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school. At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance. Staff are supported pastorally and have access to enriched opportunities.

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health and to understand the protective and risk factors for mental health

**The Promotion of Healthy, Respectful Relationships including the use of Language, Behaviours and Consent**

The school promotes healthy relationships in all of its practices and policies. Healthy relationships are manifested by how we treat each other through our use of tolerant language, appropriate behaviours and consent. This pervades through all of school life including at extra-curricular activities, school trips, class time, play time and at other social events such as dinnertime in the canteen. This value set is also appropriate when children are online. Any contravention of these basic rules is considered disrespectful, and reminders will be constantly issued on how to be the appropriate.

Each week at assembly, examples of good behaviours are promoted and rewarded through the Pupil of the Week Certificate as well as by the Principal in her weekly address to the staff and children. This transcends to all classes where each staff member reiterates these values. School policies reflect this and are shared accordingly with the parents and Governors.

**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 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.