

# ST. BENEDICT'S COLLEGE



# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

March 2016

## Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

**“children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, they must be kept safe from harm and they must be given proper care by those looking after them” (Article 19).**

The Convention also states that:

**“when adults or organisations make decisions which affect children, they must always think first about what would be best for the child” (Article 3).**

**The Children (N.I.) Order 1995** which came into operation in Northern Ireland on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1996 places duties on a number of agencies acting on behalf of children in need or enquiring into allegations of child abuse. The central thrust of the Children Order is that the **welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration.**

## Rationale

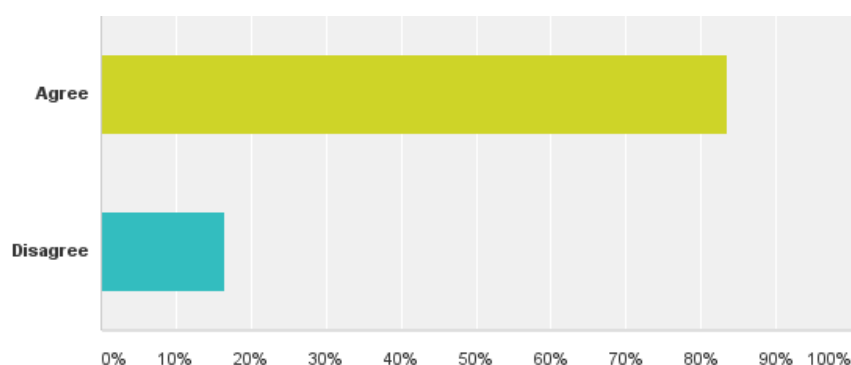
Children cannot learn or develop effectively unless they feel secure. Schools have a pastoral responsibility towards the young people in their charge, and should ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and their safety preserved at all times.

In St. Benedict's we will carry out this duty through our Pastoral Care policy which aims to provide a caring and safe environment in which our pupils can learn and develop to their full potential.

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

**The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in St. Benedict's, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.**

**The College deals effectively with poor behaviour? (Parents Survey March 2016)**



## Categories of Abuse

Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger, who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act to provide proper care, or both. Abuse may take place in a number of forms:

- 1      **Neglect**        -      the persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger.
- 2      **Physical**        -      physical injury to a child, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
- 3      **Sexual abuse** -      the sexual exploitation of a child or a young person for an adult or another young person's gratification; the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles.
- 4      **Emotional abuse** -      persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and / or behavioural development of a child.
- 5      **Cyber Bullying** -      There are many ways of bullying someone online and for some it can take shape in more ways than one. Some of the types of cyber bullying are:
  - Harassment** - This is the act of sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages and being abusive.
  - Denigration** - This is when someone may send information about another person that is fake, damaging and untrue. Sharing photos of someone for the purpose to ridicule, spreading fake rumours and gossip.
  - Flaming** - This is when someone is purposely using really extreme and offensive language and getting into online arguments and fights.
  - Impersonation** - This is when someone will hack into someone's email or social networking account and use the person's online identity to send or post vicious or embarrassing material to/about others.

## Symptoms of Abuse

Due to their day to day contact with individual children, school staff (teaching and auxiliary/ ancillary staff) are well placed to observe outward symptoms of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. Such symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes, including bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances or drug, alcohol or solvent abuse.

### For example:

**bruises**, particularly bruises of a regular shape which may indicate the use of an implement such as a strap, or the mark of a hand, lacerations, bite marks and burns may be apparent, particularly when children change their clothes for physical education, swimming and other sports activities;

possible indicators of physical neglect, such as **inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparently deficient nutrition**, and of emotional abuse such as **excessive dependence or attention-seeking**, may be noticeable;

sexual abuse may exhibit **physical signs**, or lead to a **substantial behavioural change including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate sexual behaviour**.

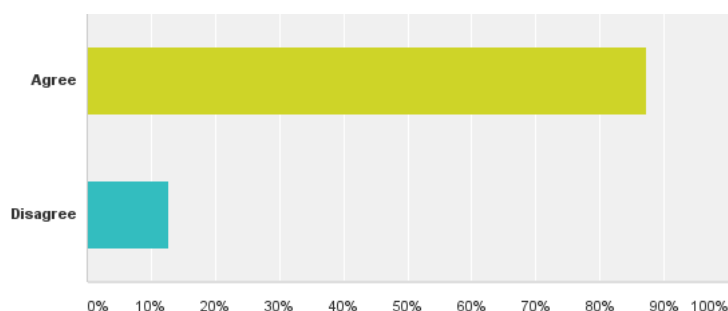
**No list of symptoms can be exhaustive. Also, it must always be remembered that alternative medical, psychological or social explanations may exist for the signs and symptoms described above. (In particular bruises to the legs are usually accidental).**

Signs such as those described above and others can do no more than give rise to concern - they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred, but teachers and other staff should be aware of the possible implications of, and alert to, all such signs, particularly if they appear in combinations or are regularly repeated.

**All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should be aware of the signs of possible abuse and should be aware of the procedures to be followed.**

### Procedures for Reporting Child Abuse

87% of pupils know the teachers who are in charge of Child Protection in school? (Pupils Survey 2016)

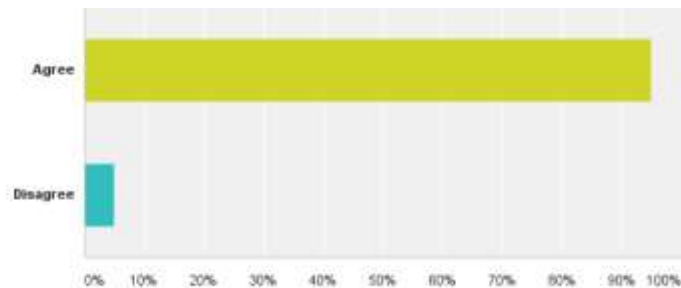


- 1 The designated teacher for child protection in St. Benedict's is Mr Mc Kendry (Pastoral Care Co-ordinator).  
The Deputy Designated Officer is Mrs B O Kane (HOY) and Mr McAuley (Principal)**
- 2 If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, the member of staff must act promptly.**
- 3 He/ she should not investigate - this is a matter for the Social Services - but should report these concerns immediately to Mr Mc Kendry (Pastoral Care Co-ordinator) discuss the matter with him and make notes of the concern.**
- 4 Mrs O Kane, Mr McAuley or Mrs O'Kane will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services.**

**If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.**

- 5 Mr Mc Kendry (Pastoral Care Co-ordinator) may seek clarification or advice and consult with Social Services before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice.

The safety of the child is our first priority.



95% Pupils feel secure in School environment (Pupil survey 2016)

- 6 Where there are concerns about possible abuse, Mrs O Kane will inform Social Services.
- 7 If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff the Principal must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal).

Where allegations against any member of staff (teaching or non-teaching) by pupils is concerned, an internal preliminary investigation should take place to eliminate false and/or vindictive accusations. This preliminary investigation should be undertaken by the principal or if he/ she is implicated, by the Board of Governors.

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 Social Services.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

- 8 Where the designated teacher is suspected of child abuse or such an allegation is made, the member of staff who is made aware of the possible offence, should inform the Deputy Designated Officers immediately.

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

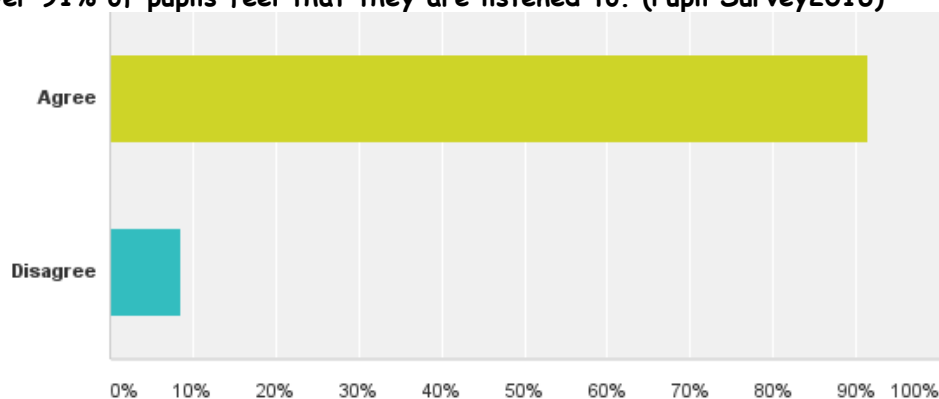
It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held in confidence. In the interests of the child, staff may need to share this information.

**NO PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY CAN OR SHOULD BE GIVEN WHERE ABUSE IS ALLEGED.**

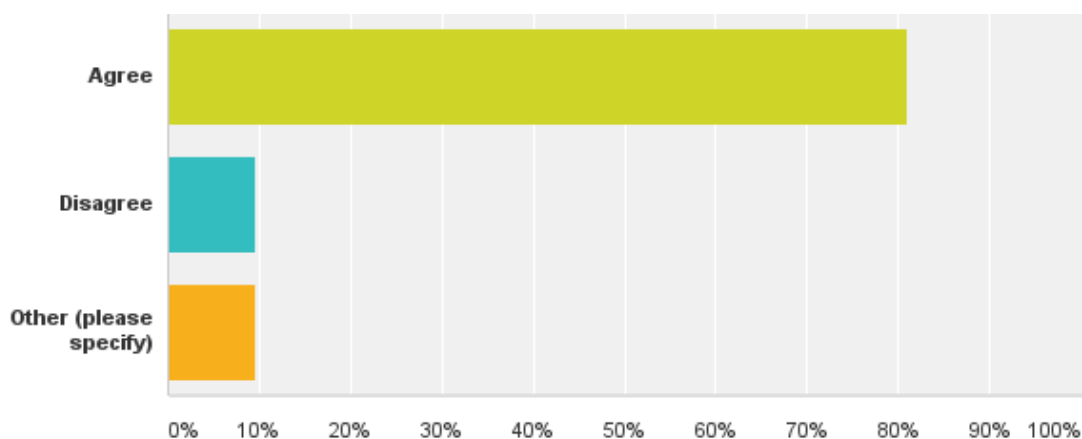
Staff need to be aware that they have a legal responsibility to report all cases of suspected physical or sexual abuse.

Good working relationships are already established with social services and the police. We are also in regular contact with our C.M.O. (Clinical Medical Officer), Education Welfare Officer and Educational Psychologist. All of these have wide experience in dealing with such cases, and regular communication should help to build the understanding, trust and confidence which will help to secure effective co-operation in cases of actual or suspected abuse.

**Over 91% of pupils feel that they are listened to. (Pupil Survey 2016)**



### **Conduct of Staff**



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**Over 81% of pupils confirm good relations between school parents and wider community. (Staff Survey 2016)**

All schools should be aware that they must safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in their charge. This duty rests with all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, and implicit in it is the assumption that the conduct of school staff towards their pupils must be above approach.

It is the responsibility of school governors to ensure that all staff are clear about the standard of behaviour expected of them.

Members of staff should reflect on every aspect of their contact with children which may give rise to allegations of abuse. As well as the more obvious physical or sexual abuse, members of staff should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse such as persistent sarcasm, verbal bullying, or severe and persistent negative comments or actions. Integral to a clear understanding of standards of behaviour expected of school staff is an understanding of the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with pupils. Teaching and non-teaching staff should bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued - it is important to be sensitive to a child's reaction to physical contact and act appropriately.

In extreme cases, a teacher might have to restrain a pupil physically to prevent him/ her causing injury to him or herself, to others or to property. In such cases no more than the minimum necessary force should be used.

**All staff should familiarise themselves with and follow the guidelines on "The Use Of Reasonable Force To Restrain or Control Pupils" as detailed on Page 75 (Pastoral Care In Schools - Child Protection).**

**It is important that all staff also follow the guidelines on Code of Conduct as detailed on Page 71.**

### **Partnership with Parents**

Parents should be made aware through the school prospectus or parents' meetings of its child protection arrangements and the fact that this may require cases to be referred to social services in the interests of the child.

### **School Curriculum**

Through the curriculum children will be taught about the risks of different kinds of abuse and will be equipped with the skills they need to help them to stay safe, by recognising unwelcome approaches or behaviour and developing the confidence to resist them as far as possible.

### **Training**

Schools, Education and Library Board and CCMS should include coverage of child protection issues in their induction training for newly qualified teachers, and provide opportunities for designated teachers to attend multi-agency child protection training. In-service training should also aim to maintain a working awareness among staff of child protection issues and procedures.

In St. Benedict's the designated teacher will organise a child protection awareness seminar on a yearly basis. This training will be provided for the whole school community including auxiliary and ancillary staff.

The Child-line and NSPCC telephone numbers will be displayed clearly in the school.

**Reference      Pastoral Care In Schools      D.E.N.I.      Child Protection**

**St. Benedict's College**  
**Child Protection Report**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Brief details of nature of complaint:**

**By whom and against whom was it made:**

**If formally referred to whom and date:**

**Details of advice sought:**

**Brief note of outcome:**