

# Edmund Rice College



# Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Date ratified by Board of Governors: September 2017  
Version: Sept 2017

# Contents

Purpose of the policy	3
Safeguarding within Edmund Rice College	3
What is safeguarding?	3
Who are children in need?	4
Looked after children	4
Specific safeguarding issues	4
Child Protection within Edmund Rice College	5
What is Child Abuse?	5-10
What do you do when you have cause for concern?	10
Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated teachers	11
Safeguarding & Child Protection Procedures (How a Parent can raise a concern)	12
Safeguarding & Child Protection Procedures (How a member of staff can raise a concern)	13
Student Pastoral Notice	14
Guidance notes for Teachers	15-16
Safeguarding & Child Protection Disclosure Form	17
Safeguarding & Child Protection Intervention Form	18
Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Teachers and Staff	19-21
Parental/Guardian Responsibility	21
Legal context	22
Child Protection – Working together	23
Child Protection and the Internet/Mobile Phones	24
Child Protection and School Policies	25

## **Purpose of the policy**

In Edmund Rice College it is recognised that all staff have a pastoral responsibility to their pupils. Everyone working in the school environment can help to keep children safe and well. In this policy document it is our intention to clearly show how the children in our care can be provided with a safe environment in which to learn.

***“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. When adults or organisations make decisions that affect children, they must always think first what would be best for the child.”***

The above extract taken from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991 reflects the College’s position in dealing with children in our care. The welfare of the pupils is paramount and is reflected in our ethos and mission statement;

**Educational excellence for all pupils  
Respect for self and others  
Care in the home, school and community**

The Edmund Rice College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is therefore designed to help protect all pupils from harm.

All staff have been vetted in accordance with Department of Education procedures. Anyone visiting the school with direct unaccompanied access to children has been vetted through the Access NI procedures.

All other visitors are required to sign the visitors register; they are issued with a visitor lanyard.

They are taken to the required area or staff member in the school or lifted from the waiting area by the appropriate staff member.

Enclosed with our Parent Booklet are procedures for parents to follow if they wish to contact the school on issues concerning Safeguarding and Child Protection.

## **Safeguarding within Edmund Rice College**

### **What is safeguarding?**

It might be difficult to accept, but every child can be hurt, put at risk of harm or abuse, regardless of their age, gender, religion or ethnicity.

Safeguarding legislation and government guidance says that safeguarding means:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children’s health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcome, and:

“the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm - is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.”

*Working together to safeguard children (HM Government 2013)*

## **Please note**

- 'Children' includes everyone under the age of 18.
- Where a child is suffering significant harm, or is likely to do so, action should be taken to protect that child. Action should also be taken to promote the welfare of a child in need of additional support, even if they are not suffering harm or are at immediate risk.
- Looked after Children often have additional vulnerabilities that staff need to be aware of.

## **Who are children in need?**

Children who:

- Are considered to be failing at school.
- Have offended.
- Are experiencing behavioural difficulties.
- Are in need of protection.
- Are experiencing ill-health, either physical or psychological.
- Are having difficulty accessing services.
- Are homeless.
- Are unaccompanied and seeking asylum.
- Are suffering family breakdown.
- Are LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender).
- Are exposed to domestic violence.
- Are misusing substances.
- Are teenage parents.
- Are carers.
- Are disabled.

## **Looked after Children**

The term 'looked after children and young people' is generally used to mean those looked after by the state, according to relevant national legislation which differs between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This includes those who are subject to a care order or temporarily classed as looked after on a planned basis for short breaks or respite care.

The term is also used to describe 'accommodated' children and young people who are looked after on a voluntary basis at the request of, or by agreement with, their parents. We refer to these children as "children in care".

## **Specific safeguarding issues**

Expert and professional organisations are best placed to provide up-to-date guidance and practical support on specific safeguarding issues. For example, NSPCC offers information for schools and colleges on its own website

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Schools and colleges can also access broad government guidance on the issues listed below via the GOV.UK website:

Child sexual exploitation (CSE). Bullying including cyber bullying. Domestic violence. Drugs. Fabricated or induced illness. Faith abuse. Forced marriage. Gangs and youth violence.	Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG). Mental health. Private fostering. Radicalisation. Sexting. Teenage relationship abuse. Trafficking.
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## **Child Protection within Edmund Rice College**

### **What is Child Abuse?**

The term “child abuse” is used to describe a range of ways in which people harm children. The harm can be in the form of physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect. It is worth noting four points here:

- Children can suffer from one or a combination of these forms of abuse.
- Abuse can take place in the home, at school or anywhere where children spend their time.
- It can happen to babies, children and young people of any age, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability, including those with special education needs.
- In almost all cases the abuser is someone known by the child, for example a parent, other relative or family friend.

The main forms of abuse are as follows;

1. Bullying and cyberbullying
2. Child sexual exploitation (FGM)
3. Child trafficking
4. Domestic violence
5. Emotional
6. Grooming
7. Harmful Sexual Behaviour
8. Neglect
9. Online abuse
10. Physical
11. Sexual

### **1. Bullying and cyberbullying**

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else – such as name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone.

It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It’s usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.

Bullying that happens online, using social networks, games and mobile phones, is often called cyberbullying. A child can feel like there’s no escape because it can happen wherever they are, at any time of day or night.

### **2. Child sexual exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them.

Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed and exploited online.

Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs.

Child sexual exploitation is a hidden crime. Young people often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening.

It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults, including oral and anal rape. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online.

- **Female genital mutilation (FGM)**

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting. Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. However, FGM is child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.

There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It is used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

### **3. Child trafficking**

Child trafficking and modern slavery are child abuse. Children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.

Children are trafficked for:

- child sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage
- domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- criminal activity such as pickpocketing, begging, transporting drugs, working on cannabis farms, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft.

Many children are trafficked into the UK from abroad, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

### **4. Domestic violence**

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. But it isn't just physical violence – domestic abuse includes emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse.

Abusive behaviour can occur in any relationship. It can continue even after the relationship has ended. Both men and women can be abused or abusers.

Domestic abuse can seriously harm children and young people. Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships

➤ **Types of domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse can include:

- sexual abuse and rape (including within a relationship)
- punching, kicking, cutting, hitting with an object
- withholding money or preventing someone from earning money
- taking control over aspects of someone's everyday life, which can include where they go and what they wear
- not letting someone leave the house
- reading emails, text messages or letters
- threatening to kill or harm them, a partner, another family member or pet.

➤ **Children and young people witnessing domestic abuse**

Witnessing domestic abuse is really distressing and scary for a child, and causes serious harm. Children living in a home where domestic abuse is happening are at risk of other types of abuse too. Children can experience domestic abuse or violence in lots of different ways. They might:

- see the abuse
- hear the abuse from another room
- see a parent's injuries or distress afterwards
- be hurt by being nearby or trying to stop the abuse

### ➤ **Teenagers experiencing domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse can happen in any relationship, and it affects young people too. They may not realise that what's happening is abuse. Even if they do, they might not tell anyone about it because they're scared of what will happen, or ashamed about what people will think.

### **5.Emotional**

Emotional abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can seriously damage a child's emotional health and development.

Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare or humiliate a child or isolating or ignoring them.

Children who are emotionally abused are often suffering another type of abuse or neglect at the same time – but this isn't always the case.

### ➤ **Types of emotional abuse**

- Withdrawn, uncommunicative
- Poor Peer relationships
- Bed wetting / soiling
- Clinging, attention seeking behaviour
- Disruptive behaviour
- Bullying, threatening behaviour
- Reluctance for parent liaison

### **6.Grooming**

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.

Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age.

Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse.

### ➤ **Signs of grooming**

The signs of grooming aren't always obvious and groomers will often go to great lengths not to be identified.

If a child is being groomed they may:

- be very secretive, including about what they are doing online
- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- go to unusual places to meet friends
- have new things such as clothes or mobile phones that they can't or won't explain
- have access to drugs and alcohol.

In older children, signs of grooming can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour, but you may notice unexplained changes in behaviour or personality, or inappropriate sexual behaviour for their age.

## 7. Harmful sexual behaviour

Harmful sexual behaviour includes:

- using sexually explicit words and phrases
- inappropriate touching
- using sexual violence or threats
- full penetrative sex with other children or adults.

Children and young people who develop harmful sexual behaviour harm themselves and others.

### Age differences and harmful sexual behaviour

Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other isn't (Davies, 2012).

However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled (Rich, 2011).

If you're not sure whether a sexual behaviour is harmful find out about the signs, symptoms and effects of harmful sexual behaviour.

## 8. Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and is the most common form of child abuse.

A child may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care.

A child may be put in danger or not protected from physical or emotional harm.

They may not get the love, care and attention they need from their parents.

A child who's neglected will often suffer from other abuse as well. Neglect is dangerous and can cause serious, long-term damage - even death.

### ➤ Types of neglect

- **Physical neglect**

Failing to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing or shelter. Failing to adequately supervise a child, or provide for their safety.

- **Educational neglect**

Failing to ensure a child receives an education.

- **Emotional neglect**

Failing to meet a child's needs for nurture and stimulation, perhaps by ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them. It's often the most difficult to prove.

- **Medical neglect**

Failing to provide appropriate health care, including dental care and refusal of care or ignoring medical recommendations.

### ➤ Signs of neglect

- Unkempt appearance
- Poor hygiene
- Underfed, always hungry
- Left to get out to school while a parent is working
- Always going home to an empty house
- Inadequate supervision

## **9. Online abuse**

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Children and young people may experience cyberbullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse.

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know, as well as from strangers. Online abuse may be part of abuse that is taking place in the real world (for example bullying or grooming). Or it may be that the abuse only happens online (for example persuading children to take part in sexual activity online).

Children can feel like there is no escape from online abuse – abusers can contact them at any time of the day or night, the abuse can come into safe places like their bedrooms, and images and videos can be stored and shared with other people.

## **10. Physical**

Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

It isn't accidental - children who are physically abused suffer violence such as being hit, kicked, poisoned, burned, slapped or having objects thrown at them. Shaking or hitting babies can cause non-accidental head injuries (NAHI). Sometimes parents or carers will make up or cause the symptoms of illness in their child, perhaps giving them medicine they don't need and making the child unwell – this is known as fabricated or induced illness (FII).

### ➤ **Signs of physical abuse**

- Bruising of different ages on back, buttocks, upper arms, around the ears
- Bruising of different shapes
- Lacerations, burn marks
- Bite marks, Nail scratches
- Untreated Injuries

## **11. Sexual**

A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact and it can happen online.

Sometimes the child won't understand that what's happening to them is abuse.

They may not even understand that it's wrong.

### ➤ **Signs of sexual abuse**

- Inappropriate sexually explicit language
- Inappropriate flirtatious / seductive behaviour
- Low self esteem
- Disruptive behaviour
- Tantrums
- School absenteeism
- Unexplained Pregnancy

**Source: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/>**

### **What are the effects of child abuse?**

Children are confused and frightened by abuse. They don't know where to turn for help or who they can trust. The effects are wide ranging and can include:

- Behavioural problems.
- Educational problems.
- Mental health problems.
- Relationship difficulties.
- Unkempt appearance.
- Drug and alcohol problems.
- Suicide or other self-harm.
- In extreme cases death following abuse.

Fortunately, children who are abused can be helped. This can be done, if staff are able to recognise the symptoms at the earliest opportunity.

### **What do you do when you have a cause for concern?**

**RECEIVE** – listen to what a child says but do not ask leading questions except when to show you have understood.

**REASSURE** – ensure the child is reassured that he/she will be safe and their interests come first.

**REACT** – only to ensure that the child is safe and secure.

**RECORD** – make note of what you have seen or heard and the date and time.

**REPORT** – report to the designated teacher as soon as you have any concern for a child. When abuse is suspected or when a pupil makes an allegation that he/she is suffering or has suffered abuse, this College has a statutory obligation, under the Children (N.I.) Order 1995, to make a referral to the social services of the local Health and Social Services Trust, or to the Police.

## Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teachers in Edmund Rice College

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mr P. McMeekin and the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are Mrs G. Davey, Miss Deery and Mrs AM Ritchie. All members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching have been made fully aware of the procedures to be followed.

*Head of Pastoral  
Designated Teacher*



*Mr McMeekin*

*Assistant Head of Pastoral  
Deputy Designated Teacher*



*Mrs Davey*

*Deputy Designated Teacher*



*Mrs Ritchie*

*Deputy Designated Teacher  
SENCo*



*Miss Deery*

## Safeguarding & Child Protection Procedures

### How a parent can raise a concern?

If a parent/guardian has concerns or complaints about their own child or another pupil's safety they may take the following action.

Parent/guardian is concerned about their child's /other pupil's safety.



May contact the Head of Year or Form Tutor



If still concerned, contact the College's Designated Teacher for Child Protection.



If still concerned, contact the Principal or the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

Parents may contact Social Workers at their local Health and Social Services Trust  
E.g. North and West HSST Tel. No. 90327156. Glengormley Community Service  
Tel. No. 90849142. Social Services have after hours Duty Social Workers available  
for help on child protection matters.

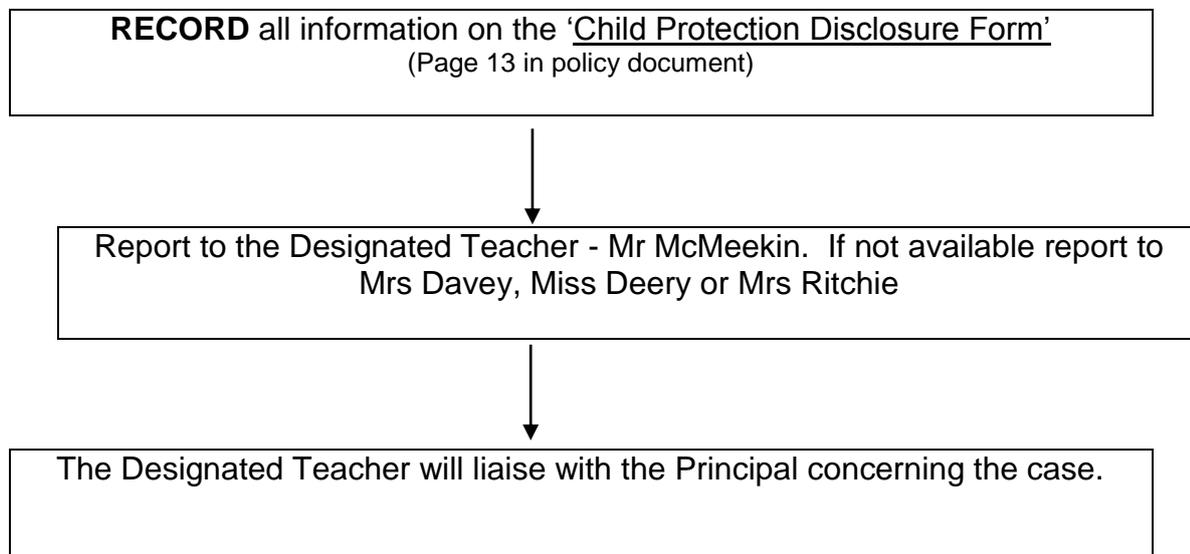
Parents may want to contact their local Police Child Care Unit e.g.  
Antrim/Newtownabbey Tel. No. 90650222 or any Police Care Unit.

## Safeguarding & Child Protection Procedures

### How a member of staff can raise a concern?

#### Arrangements for Reporting of Suspected Abuse

It is vital that all staff are familiar with and adhere to the following arrangements when reporting suspected cases.



#### **NOTE**

The Designated Teacher has the responsibility for activating the co-ordinating arrangements by notifying the local social services offices and a designated officer of the Education and Library Board.

#### **In addition: -**

##### **The Diocesan Administrator**

The Diocesan Administrator will undertake a role equivalent to that of the Board designated officer in ensuring that reporting arrangements are in place in Catholic maintained schools in their area.

The following notice advises pupils in the school on what to do if they have a concern.



In Edmund Rice College,  
it is important to us that  
students are:

 Happy

 Safe

 Secure

However, if you ever  
feel the need to talk  
about any issues that  
concern you, contact  
any teacher

**REMEMBER - IT'S GOOD TO  
TALK!**

## **Guidance Notes for Teachers - in the event of cases coming to their notice**

The focus of attention should be the child and where appropriate, having regard to child's age and understanding, the process should be:

- Find out what the concern is.
- Reassure the child.
- Explain to the child the procedures that will be followed, i.e. details will be passed onto the designated teacher.
- Explain to the child where the school stands regarding confidentiality of information given, i.e. no promises should be made that information given will not be disclosed.
- Record all details.
- Pass information to the designated teacher for further investigation.

### **NB**

Detailed enquiries into the circumstances of the case **MUST** be left to investigating agencies. This is not the responsibility of Schools and indeed may be counterproductive. However, when abuse is suspected, it is essential to have a record of all information available. Staff should note carefully what they have observed and when observed. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail or sketched, **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should a child's clothing be removed. Any comment from the child or any person who might be the abuser should be written down, quoting words actually used, as soon as possible afterwards. A note should also be taken of any subsequent conversations or contacts.

If you think there is a possibility of abuse or neglect but have some doubts also it is important to contact the Social Services Department and discuss concerns. It is not appropriate to raise with parents your worries about abuse or neglect without first consulting the Social Services Department.

### **Disclosure of Information**

It is important to remember that delay in drawing attention to worries or concerns about possible neglect can be highly dangerous for the child. Deciding to give parents the benefit of the doubt without sharing suspicions and properly investigating them can be dangerous.

Child abuse is a criminal offence and the legal advice from CCMS is that **ANY CASE OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE MUST BE REPORTED**, irrespective of the source of the information.

### **Liability for Teachers**

Any teacher who complies with the procedures stated in making a report of suspected child abuse will not be held personally liable either legally or financially. In other words, any such teacher will be indemnified by CCMS. (CCMS Document on Child Protection)

## **Recording**

If a child tells you they have been abused you should make a note of exactly what they said, as soon as possible after they have spoken to you. Date and sign the record.

If you have any concerns about a child but have not any specific disclosure from the child, you should still discuss your concerns with the designated teacher.

Remember the following when recording a disclosure, complaint or observation:

- Factual and in neutral language.
- When? Where? Who? What?
- If a child's disclosure, record the words the child used.
- Any observations.

The following information may be useful to record:

- Behaviour or emotional state and any changes.
- Relationships with other children and staff.
- Attendance.
- Appearance and dress, particularly if there are concerns about neglect.
- Any comments, drawings or accounts of family life or parental behaviour.
- Any injuries or marks.

***USE THE FOLLOWING FORMS TO RECORD YOUR CONCERNS AND MAKE A BRIEF NOTE OF REFERENCE ON SIMS***

# EDMUND RICE COLLEGE SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION DISCLOSURE FORM



Student name	
Address	

Date of Birth	
Class	

Details of disclosure

Name of person who made disclosure	
Date of disclosure	

Action taken

Principal's Signature		Date	
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# EDMUND RICE COLLEGE SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTION FORM



Student name		Class	
Name of referrer		Date	

Reason for referral
Action taken:
Outcome:
Signed:

## **Code of Conduct and Guidelines for teachers and staff**

### **Introduction**

Staff at Edmund Rice College must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the students in their care must be above reproach. This code of conduct is essentially to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child protection by highlighting areas of risk for staff and by offering advice on proper conduct.

#### **1. Counselling and Interviews**

Counselling should take place in a location that is known to all e.g. the classroom.

The more pupils are aware that counselling takes place at certain times in the school day, the better.

There should be people within easy access (e.g. within calling distance) of the counselling location, while still ensuring confidentiality. Doors should always be kept unlocked.

Counsellor should take some short notes of the time the interview takes place, who was being interviewed and for how long.

#### **2. Private Meetings with Pupils**

- (a) Teachers should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place, but, where possible, such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people.
- (b) Where such conditions cannot apply teachers are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. The use of 'engaged' signs or lights is not advisable.
- (c) Where possible another pupil or another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

#### **3. Physical Contact**

- (a) As a general principle teachers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils. This is particularly the case with children of secondary school age and maturing children of primary school age.
- (b) Physical contact which may be misconstrued by the pupil, parent or another casual observer should be avoided. Such contact can include well intentioned informal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, which is repeated with an individual pupil, could be misconstrued, as well as more obvious and more intimate contact which should never occur.
- (c) There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and re-assurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Teachers should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen by others present to be, normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time.

- (d) Some teachers are likely to come into physical contact with their pupils from time to time in the course of their teaching, for example, when showing a pupil how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment or while demonstrating a move or exercise during games or PE. Teachers should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted by the pupil.
- (e) Heads of Departments in schools may well think it sensible to draw up their own guidelines for the use of areas such as photographic darkrooms which cover the particular circumstances of their schools.
- (f) Teachers who have to administer first-aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact in the circumstances could be misconstrued.
- (g) Following any incident where a teacher feels that his/her actions have been, or may be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal of the school. This would apply especially in a case where a teacher had been obliged to restrain a child physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or self-injury.
- (h) Teachers should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting such as a ski-trip, outdoor education camp or extended visit away from home, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where teachers may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment.

#### **4. Choice and use of Teaching Materials**

- (a) Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- (b) When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. Schools have already received advice on the value of consulting parents and governors when using materials such as the Aids education for schools and in connection with sex education programmes.

#### **5. Relationships and Attitudes**

Teachers should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when teachers of either sex are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which teachers inter-relate with pupils and where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur. In all circumstances, teachers, professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of teachers this Code of Conduct confirms, what has always been their practice.

From time to time, however, it is wise for all teachers to review their teaching styles, relationships with pupils and their manner and approach to individual pupils, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of pupils or of their parents. Therefore, staff should not befriend pupils or parents on social networking sites.

### **Emotional Abuse By Staff**

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. Members of staff should be encouraged to reflect on every aspect of their contact with children who may give rise to perceptions or allegations of this form of abuse.

### **Parental/Guardian responsibility**

**Taken from Parental Responsibility: Guidance for Schools Circular No:1999/17**

#### **What is parental responsibility?**

Parental responsibility is defined in the Children (NI) Order as ‘all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and their property’. In the context of education, for example, parental responsibility confers on a parent the right to express a preference for the school their child should attend and the responsibility to ensure regular attendance at school.

#### **Who automatically has parental responsibility?**

A mother always has parental responsibility and the only exception to this is when an adoption or a freeing for adoption order is made. Parents who were married at the time of the child’s birth or parents who were married at the time of the child’s adoption have parental responsibility and retain it regardless of separation or divorce at some later date.

Where a child’s father and mother were not married to each other at the time of the child’s birth, then only the mother automatically has parental responsibility for the child. If the child’s parents subsequently marry, then the father automatically acquires parental responsibility.

#### **Update**

##### **Births registered in Northern Ireland – taken from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

A father has parental responsibility if he’s married to the mother at the time of the child’s birth.

If a father marries the mother after the child’s birth, he has parental responsibility if he lives in Northern Ireland at the time of the marriage.

An unmarried father has parental responsibility if he’s named, or becomes named, on the child’s birth certificate (from 15 April 2002).

## **Action By Schools**

### **What does this mean for schools?**

It means that anyone who has parental responsibility for a pupil is entitled to exercise the full range of rights contained in current education legislation.

### **Must schools find out about all persons who have parental responsibility for a pupil?**

No. Schools do not need to take any special action to find out about all persons who have parental responsibility for their pupils. It is a matter for the person(s) who have parental responsibility to ensure that they are in a position to exercise their rights. This means that any person acquiring parental responsibility rights must contact the school and make appropriate arrangements.

## **Legal context**

### **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1991**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international agreement, which over 190 countries throughout the world have signed. When a government signs the Convention, they are making a 'promise' to children and young people up to the age of 18 years. This promise means that they should make sure that all the rights that are in the Convention are actually put in place.

### **The Children (NI) Order 1995**

This is the central piece of legislation and states that 'the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration'.

### **Welfare and Protection of Pupils, Education & Libraries (NI) Order provides guidelines on role of BOG**

- BOG is legally responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Parents must have access to the whole Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- BOG- the critical friend of the school.
- Child Protection should be a standing item on all BOG agenda.

### **The Sexual Offences Order 2008**

• The key term is 'sexual activity' this includes all sexual contact  
It is an offence:

- To take indecent pictures of children under the age of 18 it is also an offence to receive these images.
- For an adult to arrange to meet a child after a period of sexual 'grooming'.
- For an adult in a 'position of trust' to have any kind of sexual relationship with any child (under age 18).

### **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007**

- Places requirements on principals to ensure staff employed have all the necessary checks.

## **New legislation**

- Safeguarding Board Act (NI) 2011.
- Makes interagency co-operation a **statutory** requirement for all agencies.
- Safeguarding Board launched September 2012.

## **Child Protection – Working together**

**In Edmund Rice College, through a process of training and regular meetings the following pointers to good practice have been identified:**

- The school provides regular training on child protection for everyone who works in the school and for school governors provided by CCMS/EA.
- The school governor **Mr Ray Morgan** has responsibility for child protection.
- The school creates an ethos and culture that values, involves and listens to children.
- The school helps children understand what is not acceptable behaviour towards them and how to speak up if they have worries.
- The school builds good working relationships with parents and with other agencies.
- The staff use the curriculum to develop awareness and resilience in children.
- The staff understands the procedures to follow if any child “disappears”, i.e. check out what is happening and report any concerns.
- The school has a policy and measures to prevent bullying (a legal requirement).
- The school has guidelines that minimise the opportunities for abuse.
- Staff are friendly, courteous, fair and willing to listen.
- The school continues to develop services so children have someone to talk to, such as counselling or a peer support scheme.
- Safeguarding board NI has presented drama productions to different year groups e.g. ‘Crashing’.

## **Child Protection and the Internet/Mobile Phones**

The school currently has a policy document – 'E Safety policy that can be accessed through the office. This document sets out the policy and practices for the safe and effective use of the Internet in Edmund Rice College.

With regards to Child Protection, staff should be aware of the following:

### **1. Code of Safe Practice**

When using the Internet, email systems and digital technologies, all users must comply with all relevant legislation on copyright, property theft, libel, fraud, discrimination and obscenity. The Code of Safe Practice for Edmund Rice College makes explicit to all users (staff and pupils) what is safe and acceptable and what is not.

The scope of the Code covers fixed and mobile Internet; school PCs, laptops, and digital video equipment. It should also be noted that the use of devices owned personally by staff and pupils but brought onto school premises (such as mobile phones, camera phones, PDAs) is subject to the same requirements as technology provided by the school.

The ICT Co-ordinator will monitor the effectiveness of the Code of Practice, particularly in the light of new developments in technology.

#### **◆ Code of Practice for pupils**

Pupil access to the Internet is through a filtered service provided by C2K, which should ensure educational use made of resources is safe and secure, while protecting users and systems from abuse. Parental permission is sought from parents on an annual basis before pupils access the Internet.

In addition, the following key measures have been adopted by Edmund Rice College to ensure our pupils do not access any inappropriate material:

- The school's Code of Practice for use of the Internet and other digital technologies (enclosed) is made explicit to all pupils and is displayed prominently.
- Our Code of Practice is reviewed each school year.
- Pupils using the Internet will normally be working in highly-visible areas of the school.
- All online activity is for appropriate educational purposes and is supervised, where possible.
- Pupils will, where possible, use sites pre-selected by the teacher and appropriate to their age group.
- Pupils in Key Stage 3 are educated in the safe and effective use of the Internet, through a number of selected programmes. (See below).

The use of mobile phones by pupils is not normally permitted on the school premises during school hours, unless in exceptional circumstances, where permission may be granted by a member of staff.

During school hours, pupils are forbidden to play computer games or access social networking sites, unless specifically assigned by the teacher.

◆ **Sanctions**

Incidents of technology misuse which arise will be dealt with in accordance with the school's discipline policy. Incidents will be dealt with by the Principal/ICT Co-ordinator and may result in a temporary or permanent ban on Internet use.

Incidents involving child protection issues will be dealt with in accordance with school child protection procedures.

## **Child Protection and School Policies**

The following Pastoral Policies have been developed by the school in accordance with Department guidelines and take account of the school's responsibility in relation to Child Protection.

Anti Bullying Policy  
Critical Incident Policy  
Drugs Policy  
E Safety Policy  
Pastoral Care Policy  
Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy  
Suicide Policy / Mental Health Policy

Staff and parents can access to any of these policies by contacting the school office.

The school fully recognises the Parents right to this information and seek to accommodate this right at all times. A Parent's Handbook detailing important pastoral information is forwarded to Parents/Guardians at the beginning of each academic year.