

# Mitchell House School



## Safeguarding Children and Young People

Child Protection Arrangements [2022-23](#)



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## INTRODUCTION

**Mitchell House School provides for the needs of children and young people with physical disabilities, some of whom may have associated learning and / or sensory difficulties.**

The governors and staff of Mitchell House School fully recognise the contribution it makes to safeguarding children. We recognise that all staff, including volunteers, have a full and active part in protecting our pupils from harm.

All staff and Governors believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social physical and emotional development of the individual child.

This policy is informed by the guidance and procedures set out by DE 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection 1999, the Area Child Protection Committees' (ACPC) Regional Policy and Procedures 2005, and the amendments to the ACPC Policy and Guidelines 2008 and Cooperating to safeguard children and young people (revised 2017). We have consulted with pupils, parents, teachers and our school governors in the revision of this policy.

The central thrust of The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 is that *the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration* in all decision concerning the child. This is also reflected in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – *the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration*. The 'paramount' of the child principle underpins our Child Protection policy and procedures.

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school. The purpose of the procedures set out in this policy is to safeguard and protect our pupils by ensuring that adults who work in our school – teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers – have clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The issue of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence. We also recognise that domestic violence may be a cause of a range of physical, emotional and behavioural difficulties for children.

All staff understand that each pupil is vulnerable due to his / her physical disability.

There are **five** main elements to our policy:

1. Establishing a **safe environment** in which children/young adults can learn and develop
2. Developing and implementing **procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse**
3. Ensuring we **practice safe recruitment** in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children/young adults
4. **Raising awareness of child protection issues** and equipping children/young adults with the skills needed to keep them safe
5. **Supporting pupils/young adults** who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan

## THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM AT MITCHELL HOUSE SCHOOL

Chair of Governors: **Mr W. Haughan**

Designated Governor for Child Protection Governance: **Mr Jonny Collins**

Principal: (Chair of Safeguarding Team) **Miss Miriam Donnan (& DDT)**

Designated Teacher for Child Protection: **Mrs Paula Collins**

Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection: **Mr Iain Shanks**

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### All Adults

It is the responsibility of **ALL** adults working in the school to record and report possible / disclosed abuse to the Designated Teacher. It is the responsibility of all adults to:

- **Adopt safeguarding guidelines** including the code of behaviour for staff
- **Act upon any concern**, no matter how small it may seem, **in accordance with the school's procedures**
- **Promote safe practice and challenge poor and unsafe** behaviour
- Ensure all health and safety procedures are adhered to
- Ensure they are **aware of safeguarding procedures and are appropriately trained**

### The Chair of the Board of Governors

The Chair of the Board of Governors must:

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment
- Ensure that the school has a current Safeguarding and Child Protection policy in place and that staff implement the policy
- Ensure that appropriate Governors undertake appropriate Child Protection and recruitment & selection training
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal

### The Designated Governor for Child Protection

The Designated Governor will provide the lead in keeping the governors informed of:

- The role of the designated teachers
- The content of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- The content of a code of conduct for all adults within the school
- The content of the timely updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report.

## **The Principal**

The role of the Principal is to ensure that: -

- a designated teacher and deputy are appointed
- the policy is adopted and followed in the school
- the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (and the Board of Governors) are kept informed where appropriate
- the annual review of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy is reviewed annually
- the maintenance of confidentiality is paramount and information should only be passed to the Board of Governors on a need to know basis only.
- takes the lead in managing safeguarding and child protection concerns relating to children/ young adults in the school

## **The Designated Teacher for Child Protection**

The role of the Designated teacher is to:

- provide initial induction for all adults (before meeting pupils), and to deliver training to all school staff including support staff on the safeguarding and child protection policy
- be available to discuss the child protection concerns of any member of staff
- take responsibility for managing and keeping of all child protection concerns
- make referrals to Social Services or PSNI Child Abuse Investigation Units where appropriate
- develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operating as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.
- liaise with EA Designated Officers for Child Protection
- to keep the school Principal informed
- take the lead responsibility for the development and updating of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- ensure parents receive a copy of the child protection policy every 2 years which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made and the role of the school in this
- promote a child protection ethos in the school
- produce a written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection
- maintain all records pertaining to child protection in a secure location (accessed only by The Safeguarding Team as appropriate)
- ensure that, where a pupil on the child protection register changes school, the Designated Teacher in the receiving school is informed of the child's circumstances and who is the relevant the Social Worker.

- ensure that where a child on the child protection register has missed 2 consecutive days from school, that the child's social worker is informed of the situation (following regionally agreed protocols).

**Deputy Designated Teacher:**

To support and undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection as required.

For the purpose of this policy the term DT will be used instead of Designated Teacher (Mrs Paula Collins) and DDT - Deputy Designated Teacher (Mr Iain Shanks – Vice Principal and Miss Miriam Donnan – Principal)).

## WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

A child is a person under the age of 18 years as defined in the Children (NI) Order 1995. This policy also applies to vulnerable adults who are registered in the school to the end of their 19<sup>th</sup> year.

The Regional Adult Protection Forum has adopted the Law Commission for England and Wales (1995) definition of a “vulnerable adult” as: *‘a person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation*

Child Abuse occurs when ‘a child / young person is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children / young people may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely by a stranger.’ (ACPC, 2005)

### Types of Abuse

**Physical Abuse** – is the deliberate physical injury to a child / young adult, or the wilful neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour. (ACPC, 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms of physical abuse include:

- Unexplained bruises (in places difficult to mark)
- Human bite marks, welts or bald spots
- Unexplained lacerations, fractures or abrasions
- Untreated injuries
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Chronic runaway
- Fear of going home

**Emotional Abuse** – is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child / young adult such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child / young adult that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child / young adult frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child / young adult. It may include not giving a child opportunity to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may include online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child’s peers. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child / young adult to emotional abuse. (ACPC, 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms of emotional abuse include:

- Bullying of others
- Change in personality from outgoing to withdrawn
- Difficulty in forming / maintaining relationships with others
- Depression
- Signs of mutilation
- Attention seeking
- Chronic runaway
- Wetting and soiling
- Sudden speech disorders / communication difficulties
- Low self-esteem

**Sexual Abuse** – involves forcing or enticing a child / young adult to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children / young adults to look at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children / young adults to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. (ACPC, 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- Bruised or sore genitals
- Genital infection
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Inappropriate sexualised language or behaviour
- Low self-esteem
- Chronic depression
- Substance abuse
- Personality changes
- Fear of going home

**Neglect** – is the persistent failure to meet a child's / young adult's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child / young adult from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive. (ACPC, 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms of neglect include:

- Poor hygiene
- Constant hunger/cramming food
- Inadequate / inappropriate clothing
- Constant tiredness
- Exposed to danger / lack of adequate supervision
- Untreated illness
- Lack of peer relationships
- Compulsive stealing / begging

**Exploitation** – is the intentional ill treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud, or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Exploitation is now included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, and professionals must be aware that the abuse of children / young adults by exploitation will cause them to suffer from physical, neglect, emotional, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse.

### **Safeguarding in Specific Circumstances**

A child / young adult may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time. The way in which abuse can manifest itself can also change over time and it is important that those working to safeguard children are aware of how it can change and the impact it can have on the individual child.

- **Grooming** - this is abusive/sexual exploitation to gain the trust of the child by providing friendship/gifts/drugs. This can occur online or social media and can be difficult to detect.
- Female Genital Mutilation (**FGM**) This involves the partial/total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or non therapeutic reasons. This is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and must be reported to the PSNI immediately.
- **Fabricated or Induced Illness** – Harm can be caused when a parent/guardian fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces an illness.
- **Misuse of digital Technology** – Young people use e-technology from an early age but they need to be aware of e-safety in all forms of technology. They must also be made aware that ‘sexting’ is a criminal offence and must be reported to the PSNI.
- **Forced Marriage** - This is when marriage is conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and duress is a factor. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and must be reported to the PSNI.
- Honour Based Violence (**HBV**) This is a practice used to control the behaviour within families/social groups to sustain cultural or religious beliefs. Violence can occur when perpetrators perceive a relative has brought shame on the family/community by breaking the ‘honour code.’ Punishment can be assault, abduction, confinement, threats, or murder. This must be reported.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

1.1 Where a child / young adult confides in a member of staff or a volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret it is important that the child / young adult is told sensitively that it may be necessary to share the information with those who need to know about it, and explain that this is important to ensure the child's safekeeping.

1.2 All staff and volunteers who receive sensitive information about children / young adults or parents in the course of their professional duties should be aware that such information is **confidential**, and is not to be made the subject of general conversation, or disclosed to others outside the school other than statutory officials, as required by this policy.

1.3 All records of a safeguarding / child protection nature are held securely within the school. Access to such records is restricted to the Principal and the Designated Teacher (DT) /Deputy Designated Teachers (DDT) for Child Protection.

## 1:4 HOW TO RESPOND TO A CHILD / YOUNG ADULT WHO MAKES A DISCLOSURE

### I. Receive

- Stay calm
- Listen to what the child / young adult is saying without displaying shock or disbelief
- Accept what the child young adult is saying
- Be discreet

### II. Reassure

- Reassure the child / young adult that they have done the right thing by talking to you, **do not make promises that you cannot keep** (e.g. everything will be alright now, I'll stay with you)
- Do not promise confidentiality, staff have a duty to refer the matter to the designated teacher for child protection. Explain that you will need to talk to DT who will know what to do next
- Do reassure and alleviate guilt if the child / young adult refers to it

### III. Respond

- Respond to the child / young adult only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer the matter to the designated teacher for child protection.
- Do ask open questions (can you tell me what happened? Anything else you wish to tell me? Yes ...)
- Do not ask closed questions (those that will evoke a yes/no response, e.g. Did \_\_\_\_\_ do this to you?). Such questions invalidate evidence where a subsequent court action is necessary.
- Do not criticise the perpetrator as the child / young adult may love that person
- Do explain what you will do next (talk with the designated teacher who will know how to get help)

### IV. Record

- Make notes as soon as possible after hearing what the child / young adult has said and write them up.
- Do not destroy these original notes
- Record the date, time place, people present and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour. Record the words the child / young adult used as much as possible. – if the child/ young adult uses 'pet' words record those rather than translating them into 'proper' words. Any injuries or marks noticed can be depicted on a diagram showing position and extent

- Record statements and observable things, rather than your interpretations and assumptions.
- Sign the record and hand it to the designated teacher

*(All written records of concerns about children/young adults, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately, are securely maintained, separate from the main pupil file, and in a locked location by a member of the Safeguarding team.)*

#### **V. Refer**

- **Concerns about possible abuse must be referred to the designated teacher as soon as possible within the working day.** She will liaise with the Principal in the decision making process regarding possible referral to statutory services.

***It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies, following a referral from the designated teacher for child protection in the school.***

## 2:0 PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED (OR DISCLOSED) CHILD ABUSE

2.1 **No member of staff should investigate** – this is a matter for social services – but should report these concerns immediately to the DT, discuss the matter with him/her, make full notes (signing and dating them), and hand the note to the DT. (Pink form process)

2.2 **The DT will discuss the matter with the Principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action,** and ensure that a written record of decisions is made.

2.3 The DT, in consultation with the Principal, will decide whether, in the best interests of the child/young adult, the matter needs to be referred to social services. **If there are concerns that the child/young adult may be at risk of significant harm, the school is obliged to make a referral to social services.** Unless there are concerns that a parent/guardian may be the possible abuser, the parents/guardians will be informed immediately.

2.4 **The DT may seek clarification or advice** and consult with The Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) - Designated Officer for Child Protection at the EA, or a senior social worker before a referral is made. **No decisions to refer a child/young adult to social services will be made without full consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child/young adult is our first priority.**

2.5 Where there are concerns about possible abuse of a child the DT will inform:

- Social Services **Gateway Team** - using the regional UNOCINI framework (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland). The UNOCINI referral will be made within 24 hours of the initial telephone referral to social services Gateway Team.

- **EA's Designated Officer for Child Protection**

Where there are concerns about possible abuse of a young adult the DT will inform:

- Social Services **Vulnerable Adults Care and Protection Team**, and

- **EA's Designated Officer for Child Protection**

**In either instance, the referral will be sent electronically initially and then in an envelope marked 'CONFIDENTIAL - CHILD PROTECTION/ VULNERABLE YOUNG ADULT'.**

If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do if he/she has concerns about a child/young adult, or unsure about being able to recognise signs or symptoms of possible child abuse, he/she should talk with the DT.

It should be noted that the information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'.

### **Record Keeping**

- The School will keep accurate records of concerns expressed and the action, which has been taken. These will be maintained in a secure location, separately from the general records.
- It will be the responsibility of the Designated Teacher to ensure that such records are kept up-to-date and forwarded when a child/young adult moves school (in compliance with DE guidance)
- Only the Principal and the Designated/Deputy Teachers will have access to child protection records.

### **3:0 Supporting Vulnerable Children and Young Adults**

3.1 The staff of Mitchell House School recognise that children/young adults who are abused or witness/experience violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children/young adults at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging or they may be withdrawn.

3.2 Mitchell House School will endeavour to support the children/young adults who are exposed to risk of harm through supporting him/her in accordance with his/her agreed protection plan.

3.3 Support for all children/young adults in the school in developing skills in self-protection and developing confidence will be afforded as follows:

- The content of the curriculum, particularly through Personal Development for Mutual Understanding (PDMU), Learning for Life and Work (LLW) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).
- The school ethos which promotes a positive supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- The school behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable children/young adults in the school. The school will ensure that the children/young adults understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours towards themselves and others
- Liaison with other agencies that support the child/young adult such as Allied Health Professionals, Social Services, Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychology, and PSNI.

### **4:0 Safeguarding concerns about an adult working in the school**

4.1 Where a concern is raised about possible child abuse by an adult working in the school, the Principal (or the DT if the Principal is unavailable) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the designated teacher or the Principal).

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 investigations by social services. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

4.2 If a concern is raised about possible child abuse by the Principal, the DT must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairperson of the

Board of Governors and together they will take appropriate advice from the Child Protection Support Services for Schools (EA) and ensure the appropriate action is taken.

## HOW A PARENT/CARER CAN RAISE A CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN

Where a parent/carer has a safeguarding / child protection concern they can follow the guide below:

I have a concern about my/a child's/young adult's safety



I can talk to the class/form teacher



If I am still concerned I can talk to the Principal - Miss Donnan  
or  
I can talk to the Designated/ Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection- Mrs Collins  
or Mr Shanks



If I am still concerned I can talk or write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors - Mr Haughan  
via MHS

At anytime, I can talk to a Gateway Duty Social Worker - see page 21 for contact telephone numbers  
or  
the Police Service for Northern Ireland (101 or 02890650222)

## **5:0 MITCHELL HOUSE SCHOOL'S VETTING PROCEDURES**

### **VETTING PROCEDURES**

5.1 The selection and appointment process is the starting point for ensuring that only those who are suitable are employed to work in close proximity with children, in either a paid or unpaid capacity in our school.

5.2 In order that all reasonable steps are taken to employ and engage suitable staff to work with the children in our care we follow the guidance on pre-employment checking and safe recruitment practices provided by the Department of Education and have adopted the new arrangements for vetting and checking of staff prior to appointment or use as volunteers within the school:

- DE Circular 2006/06. Child Protection: Recruitment of People to Work with Children and Young People in Educational Settings
- DE Circular 2006/07. Child Protection: Employment of Substitute Teachers
- DE Circular 2006/08 Child Protection: Training Requirements for School Governors on Staff Recruitment and Selection Panels
- DE Circular 2006/09 Child Protection: Criminal Background Checking of Staff in Schools – Programme to Extend Coverage
- DE Circular 2006/25 Child Protection: Vetting of School Governors
- DE Circular 2008/03 Pre-Employment Checking of Persons to Work in Schools – New Arrangements
- DE Circular 2008/10 Employment of Substitute Teachers

*Copies of these circulars are available on the DE website: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk).*

All staff – whether paid or unpaid – are inducted in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy prior to contact with the pupils in our school.

## LINKS WITH OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES

### 6:0 ANTI-BULLYING

6.1 Bullying is not tolerated in Mitchell House School. The DE publication 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection' (1999) defines bullying as 'deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend him or herself'.

6.2 Our **anti- bullying policy** is set out in a separate policy and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures.

6.3 Staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both the bully and the victim will be personally contacted when bullying has been identified.

6.4 Any complaints by a parent that their child/young adult is, or may be, being bullied will be fully investigated by the DT for Child Protection, and team action will be taken to protect the victim. This will usually include ensuring that another child/young adult or a small group of children/young adults befriends and supports the child/young adult being bullied during the school day. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the DT within one week of making the complaint, indicating the investigation which has been carried out and the action taken.

6.5 The sanctions taken against a child/young adult who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of privileges in the school. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped. If a child's/young adult's bullying behaviour persists, the second stage will be to consider instigation of the child protection procedures.

## 7:0 THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM

We recognise that the school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our children/young adults by providing them with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of safeguarding and protection.

The school community will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children/young adults feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to
- Ensure that all children/young adults know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty
- Follow the curriculum for Personal and Development for Mutual Understanding - which equips children/young adults with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to whom they should turn for help if the need arises

## 8:0 PHYSICAL RESTRAINT / SAFE HANDLING

Our policy on physical restraint by staff is set out in the Positive Behaviour policy in accordance with guidelines from EA. It acknowledges that staff must only use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to the child/young adult, to another person or to school property. (Team Teach training is provided annually)

## 9:0 E-SAFETY

Our ICT Policy on e-safety is set out in a separate document. It includes Policies for the Acceptable Use of the Internet (Staff and Pupils separately) and is informed by DE guidance (DE Circular 2007/01& DE Circular 20). It acknowledges the opportunities for learning as well as the risks attached to the internet and digital technologies. Specifically, it addresses safeguarding issues that may arise in the use of the internet and digital technologies and use of digital images for both staff and pupils.

In school we take the following precautions:

- All computer systems are protected by username & password
- Access to the Internet is passed through a filtering system that blocks inappropriate websites
- E-safety education is provided to pupils at appropriate places across the curriculum to help pupils understand what safe and responsible online behaviour means and how to report any concerns they may have.

All staff have a developing understanding of e-safety, receive training and updates, know when and to whom to pass on an issue of concern, and have copies of the acceptable use policies named above.

### **10:0 Cyberbullying**

10.1 Cyberbullying can be defined as the use of Information and Communications Technology (IT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else.

10.2 School staff, parents and pupils aim to work together to prevent such behaviour and to act appropriately and effectively when it occurs.

10.3 Deliberate abuses which happen outside school, but which impinge upon or affect school pupils and staff will be dealt with through appropriate disciplinary action, and where appropriate, via an external agency.

### **11:0 Grooming and images of child abuse**

If school staff, parents or pupils suspect or are made aware of the following illegal acts it must be reported to the Designated Teacher immediately:

- A child under 16 enticed or coerced to engage in sexually explicit conduct on-line.
- Importing or transporting obscenity using telecommunications public networks.
- Knowingly receiving images of child abuse whether via the internet or other digital device (e.g. mobile phone)
- Images which appear to be photographs whether made by computer graphics or otherwise are also covered under Sexual Offences legislation.

### **12:0 EDUCATIONAL TRIPS / VISITS**

Our Residential/Day Visits Policy is informed by the 'Educational Visits Best Practice 2009' document which provides guidance in planning and carrying out educational visits in accordance with Health and Safety and Child Protection requirements.

### **13:0 STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT**

All staff and volunteers are made aware of and receive a copy of our code of conduct. The Code is informed by guidance from DE and can be found at appendix 2.

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Should any adult in the school find themselves in the rare position of being the only adult remaining in the school and in need of immediate safeguarding advice, they should use the contacts below (in the given order) to seek that help:

Social Services Gateway Team, Belfast Trust	02890 507000
Care and Protection team (18+)	02895 041744
Centralised Out of Hours	02895 049999
E.A. North Eastern Region Gateway	0300 1234 333
E.A. South Eastern Region Gateway	0300 1000 300
EA Western Region Gateway	02870314090
Child Protection Support Service for Schools:	02895 985590
PSNI – ask for Child Abuse Investigation Team in your area	101 or 02890 650222

## REVIEWING OUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Safeguarding Team at Mitchell House School will review this policy annually, or in the event of a change of legislation, or following an incident when the policy will be evaluated as to its effectiveness. Any necessary changes will be made in light of any lessons learnt and ratified by the Board of Governors.

Date policy reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: _____	Chair of Governors
_____	Principal
_____	Designated Teacher

## ***Appendix 1***

### **GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers have an important and beneficial role in supporting the work of teachers and other support staff in Mitchell House School and in contributing, by their efforts and initiative, to the life of the school.

It is essential however, that appropriate steps are taken, through screening and selection arrangements, to ensure that children/young adults are not placed at risk through allowing the unsupervised and unmanaged access of unsuitable adults to the school.

#### **Who is a Volunteer?**

A volunteer is an individual who, subject to the satisfactory procedures below, either

1. Assumes unpaid duties in a school on a regular basis on more than two occasions or
2. is engaged by the school to accompany or assist in school visits or trips; or to undertake coaching in sports activities.

#### **Use of Volunteers**

There are three main categories into which the use of volunteers might be grouped and to which guidance will apply:

- during school hours involving direct contact with children/young adults
- outside school hours involving direct contact with children/young adults
- during school hours but not usually involving direct contact with children/young adults

#### **Recruiting and Selecting Volunteers**

The school may canvass for volunteers or people may come forward to offer assistance at their own initiative. In many cases potential volunteers may already be known to the school. Others may come forward from the local community. Engagement of volunteers is only undertaken with agreement of the Board of Governors.

#### **Initial Appraisal**

As a minimum requirement all potential volunteers are asked to provide the following information:

- personal details
- qualifications and previous work with children/young adults
- a declaration as to whether they have been investigated by Social Services for child protection
- agree to a criminal record being carried out

- provide the name of two referees who are not family members or members of staff in the school
- attend an interview with the school principal with proof of identity

No individual will be admitted to the school as a volunteer until these basic steps have been completed and the results assessed.

### **Accepting Volunteers**

Where the previous procedures have been followed as appropriate and the school is satisfied that:

- the volunteer is a suitable person to have contact with the children/young adults and has the character, skills and experience to support the work of the school in a voluntary capacity;
- well defined and worthwhile activities have been identified for the volunteer to undertake and he/she is competent to undertake them;

the school will notify the individual that he/she has been accepted for voluntary duties in the school

### **The use of Volunteers**

These are the fundamental principles observed when using volunteers:

- the purpose of the volunteer is to assist staff, whether teaching or non-teaching. They are not used as substitutes either to cover activities normally undertaken by paid staff who are absent, or to release such staff to undertake other duties;
- volunteers only work under the supervision and guidance of paid staff and these arrangements should be such as to minimise the opportunities for direct, unsupervised, access to children/young adults;
- volunteers are not placed in a position of sole responsibility for the security of children/young adults, premises or equipment;
- volunteers should understand the tasks they are to undertake and receive appropriate training to enable them to perform these;
- volunteers are only allocated duties after consultation and agreement with the teacher or other member of staff with whom the volunteer will be closely involved. Teachers are not be placed under any pressure to accept a volunteer in their classroom;
- volunteers are not afforded access to records or other information relating to staff or children/young adults. An exception might be made where a child/young adult has a medical or other condition

of which all those working with the pupil should be made aware, and where agreement of the parent has been sought.

### **Health and Safety Insurance**

Volunteers are owed a duty of care under the requirements of Health and Safety Legislation. Mitchell House School therefore ensures that volunteers are treated no less favourably than paid employees in terms of the school's obligations under the legislation.

### **Duration**

Mitchell House School places a time limit on the period of the volunteer's service. This is done where the work earmarked for the volunteer is likely to be completed within a specific period. Where a volunteer's involvement is likely to be long term, the school advises the volunteer that he/she will be subject to a trial period, during which the principal monitors the volunteer's effectiveness in contributing to the life and work of the school.

### **Information and Training**

The school ensures that the volunteer receives such information, guidance, preparation and where necessary, training to enable him/her to perform tasks effectively. As a minimum, volunteers are briefed on:

- the policy of the school and the management authority in relation to pastoral care and safeguarding / child protection, including its behaviour/discipline policy, including rewards and sanctions, and the extent of the volunteer's authority within it;
- Mitchell House School's Health and Safety Policy

Arrangements are made for the volunteer to have a formal line of communication with the Designated Teacher for Child Protection for reporting issues of concern or the welfare of the children in the school.

### **School Security**

Mitchell House School has drawn on the advice from the guidance Document "Security and Personal Safety in Schools" 1997 to establish

arrangements for the admission and supervision of volunteers on school premises. Particular attention is drawn to:

- The volunteer registering at the beginning of each visit
- Providing the volunteer with a readily identifiable name badge or pass giving his/her name and status

The school ensures passes are surrendered at the end of each day and when the volunteer's involvement with the school comes to an end.

## ***Appendix 2***

### **A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF**

(Pastoral Care in Schools CHILD PROTECTION 1999)

All staff and volunteers are aware of and have received a copy of our code of conduct. The Code is informed by guidance from DE.

This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children/young adults at Mitchell House School gain from positive interaction with staff. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

#### **1. Private Meetings with Pupils**

Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual children/young adults. It is recognised that there are occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.

Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.

Where possible another child/young adult or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

#### **2. Physical Contact with Pupils**

As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children/young adults.

It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch children/young adults only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child/young adult may need reassurance involving physical comforting. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this in an age appropriate way.

Staff should never touch a child/young adult who has clearly indicated that he/she is or would be, uncomfortable with such

contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child/young adult, others or property from harm.

Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

Staff who administer first-aid to a child/young adult should ensure whenever possible that this is done in the presence of other children/young adults or another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*

Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the child/young adult, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or maybe, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal or Vice Principal.

Staff should be particularly careful when supervising children/young adults in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be casual and where staff may be in proximity to children/young adults in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

### **3. Choice and Use of Teaching Materials**

Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by children/young adults or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised.

If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

#### 4. **Relationships and Attitudes**

Staff should ensure that their relationships with children/young adults are appropriate to the age, maturity and gender, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls. Staff are aware that they are in a position of trust in relation to the children and young people at the school.

#### 5. *Communication with Pupils (including the use of Technology)*

It is now recognised that e-safety risks are posed more by behaviours and attitudes than by the technology itself. Adults must therefore ensure that they establish safe and responsible online behaviours. This means working to the school's acceptable user policy for adults which details the way in which new and emerging technologies may and may not be used and identifies sanctions for misuse.

Communication between children/young adults and adults, by whatever means, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phone text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, webcams, websites and blogs. Adults should not share any personal information with a child or young person. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the child/young person, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Internal e-mail systems should only be used in accordance with the school's policy.

This means that adults should:

- Ensure that personal social networking sites are set at private and children/young adults are never listed as approved contacts
- Never use or access social networking sites of children/young adults
- Not give their personal contact details to children/young adults, including mobile numbers
- Only use equipment e.g. mobile phones, provided by school for communication with children/young adults making sure that parents and senior management of

the school have given permission for this form of communication to be used

- Not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young adult.

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young adults, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young adults and their manner and approach to individual children/young adults, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of children/young adults or of their parents/guardians.

## INTIMATE CARE POLICY

Our Intimate Care Policy is consistent with the ACPC Regional Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines Regarding Children (2008), which were developed to safeguard children and staff. The policy applies to everyone involved in the intimate care of children/young adults in the school.

### **Introduction**

Every child/young adult in Mitchell House School has the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect.

The guidelines in this policy are designed to safeguard children/young adults and staff.

They apply to every member of staff involved with the intimate care of children/young adults.

Disabled children can be especially vulnerable. Staff involved with their intimate care need to be sensitive to their individual needs.

Staffs also need to be aware that some adults may use intimate care as an opportunity to abuse children/young adults.

It is important to bear in mind that some care tasks/treatments can be open to misinterpretation.

Adhering to these guidelines of good practice should safeguard children/young adults and staff.

### **Definition**

'Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs to each individual child/young adult. Parents/guardians have a responsibility to advise staff of the intimate care needs of their child/young adult, and staff have a responsibility to work in partnership with children/young adults and parents'. (Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines Regarding Children: Area Child Protection Committee's, 2005)

### **Principles of Intimate Care**

The following are the fundamental principles upon which the Policy and Guidelines are based:

- Every child/young adult has the right to be safe.
- Every child/young adult has the right to personal privacy.
- Every child/young adult has the right to be valued as an individual.
- Every child/young adult has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Every child/young adult has the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities.
- Every child/young adult has their right to express their views on their own intimate care and to have such views taken into account.
- Every child/young adult has the right to have levels to intimate care that are as consistent as possible.

All staff working within Mitchell House School must be vetted by the Belfast Education and Library Board. This includes students on work placement and volunteers. Vetting includes:

- Access NI checks
- Pre-employment checks
- Two independent references.

ONLY named staff identified by Mitchell House School can undertake the intimate care of children/young adults.

All staff undertaking the intimate care of children/young adults must be familiar with, and understand the Intimate Care Policy and Guidelines. Training will be provided for specific types of intimate care that is carried out e.g. catheterisation, enteral feeds etc. It is important that intimate care arrangements are agreed by Mitchell House School, parents/carers and the child/young adult. Requests for specific training for individual children/young adults will be requested by completing a form issued by the Belfast Education and Library Board and with parental permission sought before training commences.

Intimate care arrangements will be reviewed regularly. The views of all relevant parties, including the child/young adult, if appropriate, should be sought and considered to inform future arrangements.

Any concerns about a colleague's intimate care practice **MUST** be reported to the Principal immediately.

## **Procedures**

We will encourage a child's/young adult's independence as far as possible in his/her intimate care. Where the child/young adult is fully dependent we will talk with them about what is going to be done and give them choice where possible.

We will ask the child/young adult/parent/guardian any likes/dislikes while carrying out intimate care. Effective communication between parents/guardians/staff ensures practice is consistent.

Staff involved in the intimate care of a child/young adult will ensure he/she is aware of the child's/young adult's method and level of communication. Staff will ensure the child/young adult is given time to respond to a question and will explain what is happening even if there is no response.

Each child/young adult will be treated with dignity and respect. We will ensure privacy appropriate to the child's/young adult's age and situation.

Practice in intimate care will be consistent. Communication between parents/carers will help ensure practice is consistent.

In some cases, procedures will ONLY be carried out by staff who have received training and have been assessed as competent to carry out e.g. enteral feeding, catheterisation.

A positive self-esteem and body image will be encouraged by staff carrying out intimate care.

Any concerns **MUST** be reported – any unusual markings, discolouration etc. will be reported immediately to the designated teacher.

If a child/young adult is accidentally hurt, appears to be sexually aroused by the intimate care action or misunderstands or misinterprets something, the child/young adult must be reassured and to ensure his/her safety, and the incident reported immediately to the designated teacher.

If a child/young adult appears distressed or uncomfortable when personal tasks are being carried out, the care will stop immediately and the child/young adult reassured whilst trying to find out the reason for the distress.

Concerns must be reported to the designated teacher and a written record made. Parents will be made aware of any concerns.

**AT ALL TIMES THE CHILD/YOUNG ADULT WILL BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT.**

At the start of each academic year, staff carrying out intimate care will complete an Individual Care Plan which details equipment the child/young adult needs for toileting (Appendix1). This will be stored in the class file and be made available for substitute classroom assistants before they work with children/young adults in any class within the school.

## **SCHOOL POLICY FOR MANUAL HANDLING OF CHILDREN/YOUNG ADULTS**

### **School Mission Statement:**

At Mitchell House we strive to encourage mutual respect, trust and individuality. It is our goal to nurture learning and help our pupils to achieve their full potential.

### **Responsibility:**

The principal is responsible for the implementation of this policy. The principal must ensure all staff involved are trained in safe moving and handling and must work from each child's/young adult's manual handling plan. These plans will be assessed and completed by Mrs C Donaghy and assisted by one other CA.

### **Other involved staff**

All classroom assistants and general assistants within Mitchell House School.

### **Who is this policy for?**

Teachers, classroom assistants, governors, volunteers, temporary staff, students on placement, therapists.

### **Aims**

To ensure appropriate and safe manual handling of children/young adults at Mitchell House School.

To provide a consistent framework which ensures that children/young adults are handled with respect and dignity.

To ensure a safe system of assessment and training and support for children/young adults.

### **Implementation**

#### **Personal care, hygiene and safety**

Safety of pupils within Mitchell House School is of paramount importance. Staff may handle pupils following individual handling plans to ensure safety for both the child/young adult.

Harnesses and straps may be used for safety reasons. This should not be confused with 'restraint'. Hoists and other equipment are to be used under manual handling guidelines.

Some children/ with personal hygiene – please refer to the intimate care policy.

#### **Emotional Support**

Staff may use physical contact e.g. to give a pupil emotional support. Please refer to the school Touch Policy.

#### **Sensory**

Pupils may experience appropriate handling during sensory room activities, swimming / hydro and other therapies.

## **Principles**

Where pupils require handling, this will be identified in an individual plan based on the assessment carried out by the Manual Handling Advisors within school – Mrs Donaghy.

### **Dignity and Privacy**

Teachers, classroom assistants and therapists will have due regard to the pupil's right to respect and dignity when carrying out sensory and other assessments. Maximum independence will be encouraged in all pupils.

### **Appropriateness**

All staff need to be aware that physical contact can be misconstrued. All touch should, wherever possible, be age appropriate – refer to School Touch Policy.

### **Access to the Curriculum**

All pupils have the right to a broad and balanced curriculum. Some pupils who have a physical disability may have to be positioned by staff into appropriate equipment to access the curriculum. These need to be planned to minimize disruption to pupils learning but as this is part of their continued physical wellbeing it must be carried out as directed by the relevant professionals.

### **Deliberate ill treatment**

Deliberate ill treatment is unacceptable and is not tolerated.

### **Advice from Physiotherapists**

The advice of the physiotherapist should always be taken into consideration when routinely handling pupils.

### **Agreement of parents and carers**

The agreement of parents and carers will be sought on individual care plans that involve handling. This general policy for handling pupils will be approved by the Governors and reviewed bi-annually.

### **Procedures**

All staff will identify when handling will be used so parent / carer permission will be obtained. The individual handling plan will be kept in the class information file.

## **Assisting and Handling Procedures**

1.1 As the assistance and handling needs of each student within Mitchell House School vary due to the particular abilities and limitations of the individual, it is not possible to describe specific techniques or routines within this document.

1.2 Our aim is to develop a positive approach to all assisting and handling activities so that we can secure the commitment and participation of all staff, students and their parents or guardians when appropriate.

1.3 We will adopt a planned and systematic approach to the assisting and handling of students. This will be based on appropriate information about each individual, risk assessment and care planning in order that we can eliminate, minimize, reduce or control all risks to the lowest level reasonably practicable. Each assistance and handling procedure within Mitchell House School must be assessed on an individual basis. The assessment will be suitable and sufficient in order to eliminate or reduce the risks of injury, as far as is practicable.

1.4 We will ensure that risk assessment is a central feature of safer assistance or handling procedures, particularly where it has been identified that there may be potential of injury to staff and / or students.

1.5 The methods of movement, techniques and equipment that may be required to be used will be described in detail in a Movement Care Plan (MCP). The Movement Care Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis even if it is to confirm that there has been no change in procedures. Assessments will be automatically undertaken whenever there is any change in the students' needs, equipment or in the environment in which they are. A system of monitoring will ensure that the procedures, techniques and equipment detailed in the MCP is appropriate for the individual student at any particular time.

1.6 In some instances the risk assessment may relate to a single task e.g. transferring from a wheelchair to a chair. When there is a sequenced activity the assessment will cover the whole range of activities involved at any one time.

1.7 The general principles, risk assessment procedures and a range of techniques which may be utilized will be provided as part of the training programme for all staff, volunteers, parents or guardians, appropriate to their roles and needs. The assessment will be carried out by Mrs C Donaghy and/or Mrs K Thompson.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

In circumstances where stressful assistance or handling cannot be avoided, even greater care must be exercised with the risk assessment process. The MCP will be prepared with attention to all elements of the task, particularly if the student's condition is variable. It is important that consultation takes place with the students and their parents/guardians to ensure that all those who are involved are fully aware of the risk potentials and the measures that have been introduced to reduce these to the lowest levels reasonably practicable.

## **Reporting of Accidents**

All staff must ensure that any student assistance or handling activity in which an injury occurs must be reported to the Principal as soon as possible. An accident form must be completed giving information on the accident and detailing any injury.

### **Mechanical Equipment and Handling Aids**

2.1 Staff are expected to make full use of any items of equipment provided for use by a particular student in order to avoid all unnecessary manual handling. This should be in accordance with the procedures described in the MCP.

2.2 All staff will be made aware of the equipment that is available, the importance of using it in accordance with the MCP and training will be provided to ensure they are competent in the use of the equipment.

2.3 Staff will be made aware of what equipment is available and where it is located.

2.4 All mechanical equipment and other assistance and handling equipment will be regularly checked to ensure it is in good working order.

2.5 All staff have a responsibility to use assistance and handling equipment in accordance with the training they have received. Any malfunction or defect MUST be reported immediately to the principal.

### **Conflicts in Assistance and Handling**

If a pupil refuses to be moved by the method described in the MCP or if a parent/guardian refuses permission for the student to be moved as specified in the MCP this MUST be reported to the principal **IMMEDIATELY**. Whenever possible, the benefits of the MCP should be discussed with the students and or their parents/guardians and seek their co-operation.

When there are genuine concerns expressed by the student and/or their parents/guardians, or when a particular manoeuvre causes distress, the situation must be carefully reassessed and a balance achieved to an acceptable level.

## **Training**

Staff are expected to undertake and use training provided for them. Centaur Training Ltd. will be responsible for training and evaluating the KEY TRAINERS – Mrs C Donaghy – who is based at Mitchell House School.

These Key Trainers have been provided with all the necessary training materials and back up resources and these will be updated when appropriate. Refresher training will be available for these members of staff.

The KEY TRAINERS will be responsible for providing training with all staff who work with pupils within Mitchell House School.

This training will be general and specific in relation to the needs of the individual students.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be monitored by the Board of Governors.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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