



Friends' School Lisburn

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

1. ETHOS

The Friends' School Safeguarding Policy is drawn up in the context of the ethos of the School and in line with our Mission Statement which states that Friends' School seeks to provide an environment in which pupils, staff and parents are committed to the idea of excellence within a caring, supportive community.

2. CONTEXT

This Policy is set within the context of:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
- Circular 1999/10 Pastoral Care in Schools DENI
- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- Promotion of Positive Behaviour 2001 DENI
- The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
- Department of Education Circulars 03/13, 06/06, 06/07, 06/08, 06/09, 06/25, 07.01, 08/03.08/10 DENI
- Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures 2005 DHSS
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008
- Friends' School Pastoral Care Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Acceptable Use of Mobile Telephone and Other Handheld Electronic Devices Policies, Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy and Health and Safety Policy.

3. AIMS

Friends' School has a responsibility for the welfare and safety of all pupils and endeavours to maintain a strong pastoral ethos based on a commitment to care, open communication, relationships of trust, cooperation and good sense.

The aims of the Safeguarding Policy are:

- To provide a secure framework in relation to safeguarding/child protection
- To outline the signs and symptoms of possible child abuse
- To set down clear procedures to be followed when a disclosure or suspected child abuse incident occurs
- To define the roles and responsibilities of persons involved
- To provide a Code of Conduct for staff

4. Roles and Responsibilities

(a) Governors

The Board of Governors has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils at Friends' School and to ensure that an appropriate Safeguarding Policy and procedures are in place. **Latifa McCullagh** is the Governor with responsibility for Safeguarding. The Chair of the Board of Governors, **Andrew Greer** and **Latifa McCullagh** are members of Friends' School Safeguarding Team.

The Board of Governors has a duty to ensure that correct procedures are followed for recruitment and selection of staff and that all staff (paid and unpaid) are vetted in accordance with DE Circulars 2006/06, 2006/07, 2006/25 and 2008/03

(b) Principal

In the event of an allegation, suspicion or instance of Child Abuse, the **Principal** will:

- consider the report received from the Designated Teacher (or Deputy Designated Teacher)
- ensure that appropriate procedures are implemented, including the immediate safeguarding of a pupil considered at risk
- decide on the need for a referral, either informal or formal, to Social Services, to the Designated Officer of SEELB and to other agencies, as appropriate
- inform the Chair of the Board of Governors and the other members of the Safeguarding Team
- maintain records of disclosures of abuse, suspicions of abuse and complaints against staff
- inform parents, as and when appropriate
- initiate vetting procedures for all new staff and volunteers
- respond to concerns under the School's Complaints Procedure

(c) Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher

In Friends' School, the **Designated Teacher** for Safeguarding is **Ciara Lowe, Senior Teacher**. The **Deputy Designated Teachers** are **Steven Alexander, Vice-Principal** and **Sarah Cochrane, Vice-Principal**.

The **Designated Teacher** and **Deputy Designated Teachers** will:

- lead the planning, implementation and development of procedures for Safeguarding in Friends' School
- train teaching and non-teaching staff and provide guidance in a Code of Conduct (Appendix 2)
- attend relevant training for DTs/DDTs in line with statutory requirements
- provide Safeguarding guidelines for temporary visitors to School, e.g. coaching staff and student teachers
- ensure that all pupils have been appropriately informed about the arrangements for Safeguarding in School
- receive concerns and reports from staff on all Safeguarding matters
- collate details of such reports or concerns through Notes of Concern and the Safeguarding List
- keep the Principal informed of incidents and developments
- report incidents or suspicions of Child Abuse happening in or outside School to Social Services/SEELB Duty Officer on common format referral tool, the UNOCINI
- liaise with outside agencies
- liaise with parents concerned, as appropriate

- ensure that there is appropriate support available to children and young people on the Child Protection register, have disclosed abuse or are considered at particular risk
- communicate the Safeguarding Policy every two years with parents
- ensure that there is a timetabled annual review of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures by the Leadership Team
- report to Governors annually
- plan opportunities within the Learning for Life and Work curriculum to address issues with pupils

(d)Staff will:

- take steps to ensure that pupils in their care are protected from harm
- attend annual Safeguarding training
- be alert for signs and symptoms of possible Child Abuse (See Appendix 1)
- know who the Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teachers are
- be familiar with the School's Safeguarding Policy
- be familiar with the School's Anti Bullying Policy
- know and follow the Safeguarding procedures
- know and follow guidance on talking with children in the event of a disclosure
- report disclosures or concerns of possible abuse to Designated Teacher or Deputy, via a Note of Concern
- Keep a brief written record of details
- ensure that their own professional conduct is prudent

5. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Child Abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care.

Staff in School are well placed to observe symptoms in pupils' appearance, behaviour, learning progress, attendance or language which may indicate incidents of actual or possible Child Abuse.

Appendix 1 contains details on the categories of Child Abuse.

ALL CONCERNS AND REPORTS MUST BE REPORTED

6. BULLYING

The School has a duty to address the issue of bullying through its Anti-Bullying Policy. All staff are encouraged to be vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring and will take steps to prevent it happening, to protect and reassure the pupil bullied and to take appropriate steps to change the behaviour of the bully.

7. PROCEDURES

STAFF RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

The following guidelines provide staff with a framework for action (Appendix 3) in the event of a disclosure of Child Abuse from a pupil. School recognizes that it takes courage and determination for a pupil to tell an adult that s/he is being abused and issues around disclosures are usually complex and very sensitive. Staff can often feel vulnerable in this situation and the following points are designed to reassure staff and provide support for them in the situation.

GUIDELINES

- Ensure that the pupil is safe from risk
- React calmly without displaying shock or disbelief
- Reassure the pupil and tell him/her that s/he is not to blame
- Try to control feelings about the perpetrator
- Listen and accept what is said, without comment on what is disclosed
- Avoid investigation, asking questions for clarification only
- Do not promise confidentiality to pupil – tell pupil that only those persons who need to know will be told
- Keep written notes of the incident including time/date/location/nonverbal behaviour/physical signs to whom referral was made – as close to incident occurring as possible
- Use the words the pupil uses
- Inform the Designated Teacher (or Deputy) as soon as possible - do not discuss with other colleagues
- Be available to support pupil as appropriate after the disclosure

8. PARENTS

Friends' School values and seeks to promote open communication and good relationships with pupils and parents, responding readily and consistently to any concerns raised. The School's structures for pastoral care offer a co-ordinated support system in which pupils can approach Subject Teachers, Collect Teachers, Year Teachers, Vice Principals, Principal, School Nurse or Counsellors.

Parents wishing to register concern about their child's welfare in School should take one of the following courses of action, depending on the nature of the concern:

- speak/write to a pupil's Year Teacher
- speak/write to Designated Teacher / Vice-Principal
- speak/write to Principal
- write to Chairman of Board of Governors

All concerns will be followed up as appropriate.

9. SCHOOL TRIPS

For trips in Categories 3, 4 and 5 (overnight stays), the Designated Teacher will brief the lead teacher on how to implement a Safety Plan in cases where a disclosure is made or an incident takes place on the trip. Prior to departure, the Designated Teacher will also provide a safeguarding update for the lead teacher to include specific safeguarding needs. This will be done in liaison with the pupil and parent so that appropriate care can be implemented, and a specific Safety Plan will be provided where necessary. In cases where a decision is made that it is unsafe for a child to participate in a school trip, this will be done in consultation with the Principal, lead teacher, pupil and parent.

10. OPERATION ENCOMPASS

Friends' School is an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of the school safeguarding team. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 'Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools' and a note will be made in the child's child protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

For further information see [The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#).

10. CONCLUSION

The protection of children is a natural part of pastoral care. The experiences that children gain from School depend upon relationships of trust between teachers and pupils and from a feeling of security within School's environment. However, the area of Child Abuse can be difficult and sensitive. It is hoped that this Policy offers clear procedures for action; draws attention to areas of potential risk and provides guidance to staff in respecting the rights of children in their care whilst also keeping themselves safe.

Any member of staff who complies with School's procedures and guidance and who acts in good faith will receive the full support of the Board of Governors and will not be legally or financially liable.

Reviewed: March 2024

Next Review: March 2026

Appendix 1

DEFINITION OF ABUSE

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.

Types of Abuse

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

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child 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 in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

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 in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engaging 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.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child'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 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 (faltering growth).

Sometimes a young person's own behaviour will place him or her at risk of harm, for example, alcohol or illegal drugs consumption, and this may result in a safeguarding concern.

Abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

(As set down in the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures, April 2005)

Appendix 2

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

This Code is intended to provide guidance and to act as a safeguard for all members of staff whose work brings them into regular contact with children. It is accepted that Safeguarding/Child Protection is about keeping children safe; it is also about keeping staff safe when working alongside children. All staff should maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid improper contact or relationships with pupils and respect their position of trust.

Guidelines for Staff

1. Physical Contact with Pupils

- As a general principle, staff must not make physical contact with pupils.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this. Ask the child's permission.
- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- Staff who have to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children 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 pupil, parent or casual observers should be avoided.

2. Relationships and Attitudes

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

3. E-Safety

- Staff should ensure that they have an up-to-date knowledge of School's E-Safety Policy.
- Users must report immediately the receipt of any communication that makes them feel uncomfortable, is offensive, discriminatory, threatening or bullying in nature. Users should not respond to any such communication.
- Care should be taken when communicating with pupils, parents or other members of staff. The C2K system, rather than personal email, should be used. Tone and content should be professional and personal email addresses, text messaging (except through SIMS) or social media should not be used. Under no circumstances, should staff correspond with pupils through social media sites.
- Care should be exercised when corresponding with others on social networking sites. Staff should bear in mind who may access their own profiles on such sites and take care as to the information they display about themselves and their personal lives. They should ensure that they have installed and are using the appropriate privacy settings. No reference should be made in social media to pupils, parents or school staff. Personal opinions should not be attributed to the school. Personal information should

not be posted on the school website and only official email addresses should be used to identify members of staff.

- Care should be exercised in communicating with pupils via telephone. All communications should be restricted to school business. School telephones should be used. Staff are advised that they should not send texts or make private phone calls during class time; and that personal calls and texts should not be received in class time except in exceptional circumstances. Staff are advised to use discretion when using mobile telephones on the school premises.
- Digital images of pupils should never be stored on personally owned devices.
- The following activities are illegal and are therefore not permitted under any circumstances: the production or distribution of indecent images of children; the grooming, incitement, arrangement or facilitation of sexual acts against children; the use of material which could be deemed to be stirring up racial, sexual or religious hatred; and the viewing or distributing pornography.

4. Interviews with Pupils

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognized that there will be 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. Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

5. Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

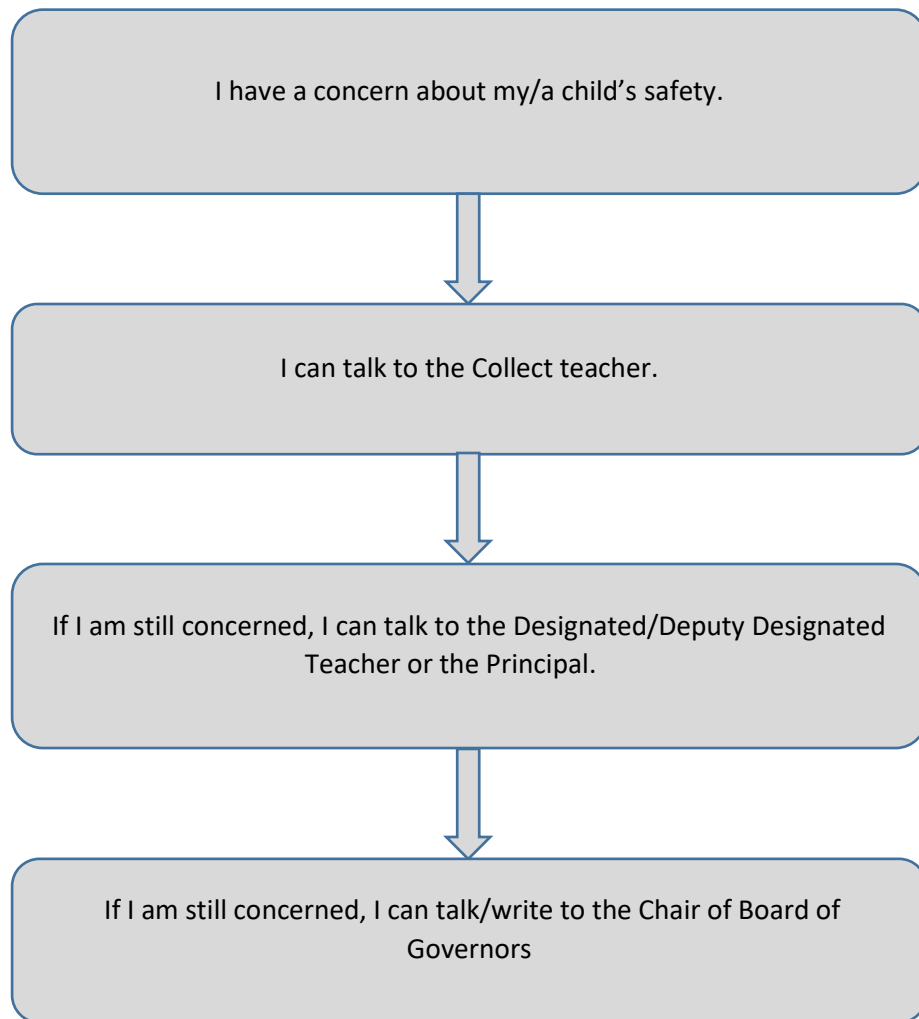
- Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal, or one of the Vice Principals, for confirmation of its suitability.

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

A complaint relating to inappropriate conduct on the part of a member of staff will be dealt with under the School procedures. A concern for fairness and for the welfare, dignity and protection of staff and pupils will be paramount.

Appendix 3

If a parent has a potential child protection concern within the school:

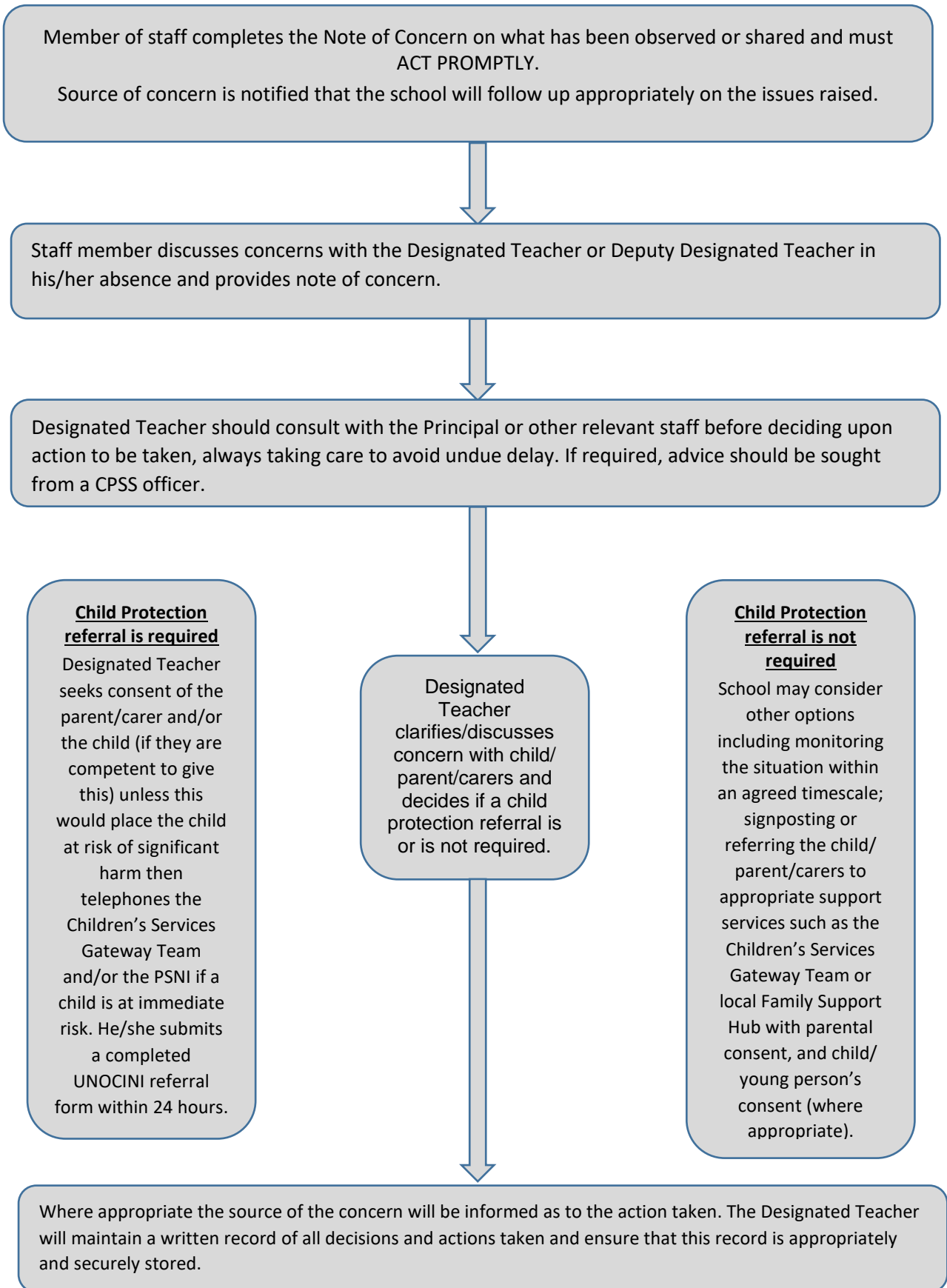


At any time I can talk to the local Children's Services Gateway Team or The PSNI Central Referral Unit (028 9025 9299).

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

If a parent has a concern about a child's safety or suspect child abuse within the local community, it should be brought directly to the attention of the Children's Services Gateway Team.

Procedure where the School has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff:



Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff

