



<p style="text-align: center;">Policy Title</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Safeguarding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Child Protection</p>				
<i>Prepared by</i>		Name		Month/ Year
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<i>Authorised by</i>		Name		Month/ Year
<i>Scheduled Review</i>		Review Frequency (years)		
<i>(Circle relevant Review cycle)</i>		Annual	<u>2</u>	3
		Due Date		
		November 2025		

## **1. Overview**

Every child attending West Winds Primary and Nursery has the right to feel safe and secure in a caring and disciplined pastoral environment, with protection from physical, mental and sexual abuse irrespective of ability, race, religion and culture. At West Winds, integration and empowerment are values central to our Child Protection policy and procedures.

At West Winds Primary School and Nursery Unit, we have a fundamental responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our care. We will carry out this duty using our Pastoral Care policy, which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our children can learn and develop to their full potential. We try to protect our pupils by helping them learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviours in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interests of the child as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the children in their care must be above reproach. Staff have also adopted a Code of Conduct for their behaviour towards pupils. This is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children 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 sensible conduct. Staff, at all times, are also directed to the guidelines for self-protection. All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school – teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers – have clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child, and the welfare of each child is our paramount consideration. The issue of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school and we recognise that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

## **2. Legal and Policy Context**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, "Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland" (DOH, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools" (DENI Circular 2024/09) and the Safeguarding Board for NI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy:

- the child's welfare is paramount;
- the voice of the child should be heard;
- parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together;
- partnership;
- prevention;
- responses should be proportionate to the circumstances;
- protection; and
- evidence based and informed decision making.

### **3. Managing Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools**

#### **3.1 Responsibilities of the Board Of Governors (BOG)**

Board of Governors must ensure that:

- a designated governor for child protection is appointed;
- a designated and deputy designated teacher are appointed in their school;
- they have a full understanding of the roles of the designated and deputy designated teachers for child protection;
- safeguarding and Child Protection training is given to all staff and governors including refresher training;
- the school has a Child Protection policy which is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every two years.
- the school has an Anti-Bullying policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying. See the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016;
- the school ensures that other safeguarding policies are reviewed at least every three years, or as specified in relevant guidance
- there is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school;
- all school staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted, in line with DE Circular 2012/19;
- they receive a full annual report on all child protection matters (It is best practice that they receive a termly report of child protection activities). This report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the school, including training for staff; and

- the school maintains the following child protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff and 2016/20 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools:
  - Safeguarding and child protection concerns
  - Disclosures of abuse
  - Complaints against staff
  - Staff induction and training

### **3.2 The School Safeguarding Team**

Designated Teacher – Miss Claire Carson (VP)  
 Deputy Designated Teacher (Primary) – Mrs Emily Leary  
 Deputy Designated Teacher (Nursery) – Mrs Sarah Murray  
 Principal – Mrs Hannah Robinson  
 Chair of Board of Governors – Mrs Lorraine Baxter  
 Designated Governor for Child Protection – Mrs Cori McKelvey

#### **3.2.1 Chair of Board of Governors – Mrs Lorraine Baxter**

- has a pivotal role in creating and maintaining a safeguarding ethos;
- receives training from CPSS and HR;
- assumes lead responsibility in the event of a CP complaint or concern about the principal;
- ensures compliance with legislation, Child Protection record keeping and policies
- responsible for signing and dating the Record of Child Abuse Complaints annually, even if there are no entries

#### **3.2.2 Designated Governor for Child Protection –Mrs Cori McKelvey**

Advises the governors on:

- the role of the designated and deputy designated teachers
- the content of the child protection policies
- the content of a code of conduct for adults within the school
- the content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report
- recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff

#### **3.2.3 School Principal – Mrs Hannah Robinson**

- as secretary to the Board of Governors, assist in fulfilling its safeguarding and child protection duties;
- ensure the Board of Governors are kept fully informed of all developments relating to safeguarding including changes to legislation, policy, procedures, DE circulars, inclusion of child protection on the termly meeting agenda;
- to manage allegations / complaints against school staff;
- to establish and manage the operational systems for safeguarding and child protection;
- to appoint and manage designated teacher/deputy designated teachers who are enabled to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities;
- to ensure safe and effective recruitment and selection including awareness of safeguarding and child protection for new staff and volunteers;

- ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy, or summary, of the Child Protection Policy at intake and, at a minimum, every two years.

#### **4.2.4. Designated Teacher for Child Protection – Miss Claire Carson**

- the induction and training of all school staff including support staff;
- being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff;
- responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns;
- maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services e.g. Family Support Hubs;
- making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where appropriate;
- liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection;
- keeping the school Principal informed;
- lead responsibility for the development of the school's Child Protection policy;
- promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school; and
- compiling written reports to the Board of Governors regarding Child Protection.

#### **4.2.5. Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection – Mrs Emily Leary / Mrs Sarah Murray**

The role of the Deputy Designated Teacher (DDT) is to work co-operatively with the Designated Teacher in fulfilling her responsibilities. The DDT works in partnership with the Designated Teacher so that she develops sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher when required.

#### **4.2.6. School staff and Volunteers**

- members of staff must refer concerns or disclosures about a child or staff member to the designated teacher for child protection or to either of the deputy designated teachers if she is not available;
- class teachers should complete the note of concern with the designated teacher if there are safeguarding concerns such as: poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse;
- staff should not give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, they should not investigate nor should they ask leading questions.

### **3.3 Child Protection Policy**

The Department of Education states,

"Schools are expected to do whatever is reasonable, in all the circumstances of the case, to safeguard and promote their pupils' safety and wellbeing. Schools should work to create and maintain an ethos which contributes to the care, safety and well-being of their children and must maintain a child protection policy that reflects both its legal duties and its safeguarding and child protection duties."

'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A guide for Schools', 2018

### **3.3.1 The Child Protection Policy**

West Winds' Child Protection Policy sets out clearly the procedures to be followed in cases of suspected abuse, drawing on the guidance provided by the Department of Education, EA, the former DHSSPS, the Department of Health, the appropriate Employing Agency and the Safeguarding Board for NI. Our Child Protection Policy is a 'living document' which provides a secure framework within which all staff can work. It reflects the values to which the school community is committed and how the school is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in safeguarding children.

### **3.4 Recruitment and vetting of staff and volunteers**

Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals' access to children through the education system. At West Winds Primary, we ensure that all persons on school property are vetted, inducted and supervised as appropriate. All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in West Winds Primary are vetted / supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

#### **3.4.1 AccessNI clearance**

The following groups must have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) from AccessNI **before** taking up post:

- All new **paid** teaching and non-teaching staff
- Private contracted transport providers – e.g. named drivers

#### **4.4.2. Volunteers**

- Volunteers who work unsupervised are required to have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC)
- A volunteer who works under supervision is not required to obtain an EDC, however, school must determine whether the level of supervision meets the statutory standard, as set out in DE Circular 2012/19
- School must also ensure that volunteers, eg. coaches, who are employed by others, have the necessary clearances in place.

### **3.5 Visitors to Schools**

Visitors to school, such as parents, suppliers of goods and services, do not routinely need to be vetted before being allowed onto school premises. However, such visitors should be managed by school staff and their access to areas and movement within the school should be restricted as needs require.

Visitors to West Winds are:

- Met / directed by school staff
- Signed in and out of the school by school staff
- If appropriate, be given restricted access to only specific areas of the school
- Where possible, be escorted by a member of staff
- Clearly identified with visitor pass
- Access to pupils restricted to the purpose of their visit
- If delivering goods or carrying out building / maintenance or repair tasks their work should be cordoned off from pupils for health and safety reasons

### **3.6 Pupils on work Experience**

Health and Social Care Programmes will require an EDC for pupils on long term placement and may be required for pupils on work experience. Pupils coming into school on work experience do not require Access NI clearance if they are fully supervised by school staff.

### **3.7 Child Protection Training**

#### **3.7.1 School Governors**

Child Protection training for school governors has three specific strands:

- Initial Child Protection awareness training as part of the induction programme for all new governors
- CP training from CPSS for Chairperson and Designated Governor for CP; this should be completed every four years / once in every term of office
- Training in recruitment, selection and vetting which incorporates child protection legislation and DE guidance for all governors who will be sitting on interview or teacher appointments panels

#### **3.7.2 Designated Teacher Training / Deputy Designated Training** (DT and DDT)

All new Designated and Deputy Designated teachers should attend the two day CPSS Introduction to Child Protection course, within their first year of post. Refresher training should be attended every three years thereafter. A certificate of attendance will be issued to staff as proof of attendance (displayed at the front entrance) and this may be examined by ETI during an inspection.

The DT and DDT are expected to disseminate child protection training to the whole school, at the beginning of the school year, with new staff receiving training as part of their induction programme.

### **4.8. Conduct of Staff**

The protection and promotion of the welfare of children is a responsibility for all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching. Staff should work towards a culture of mutual trust and respect in school through which the best interests of the children entrusted to their care is paramount.

The code of conduct of school staff towards their pupils must be above reproach. This holds true whatever the age, gender, or developmental maturity of the pupils, but clearly the younger child, or the greater the degree of learning difficulties he/she has, the less likely it will be that he/she will be able to recognise and respond appropriately to abuse by any member of staff or the trust that his / her position offers. Our school staff have adopted a Code of Conduct for their behaviour towards pupils. This is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children 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.

#### **4.9 Parents**

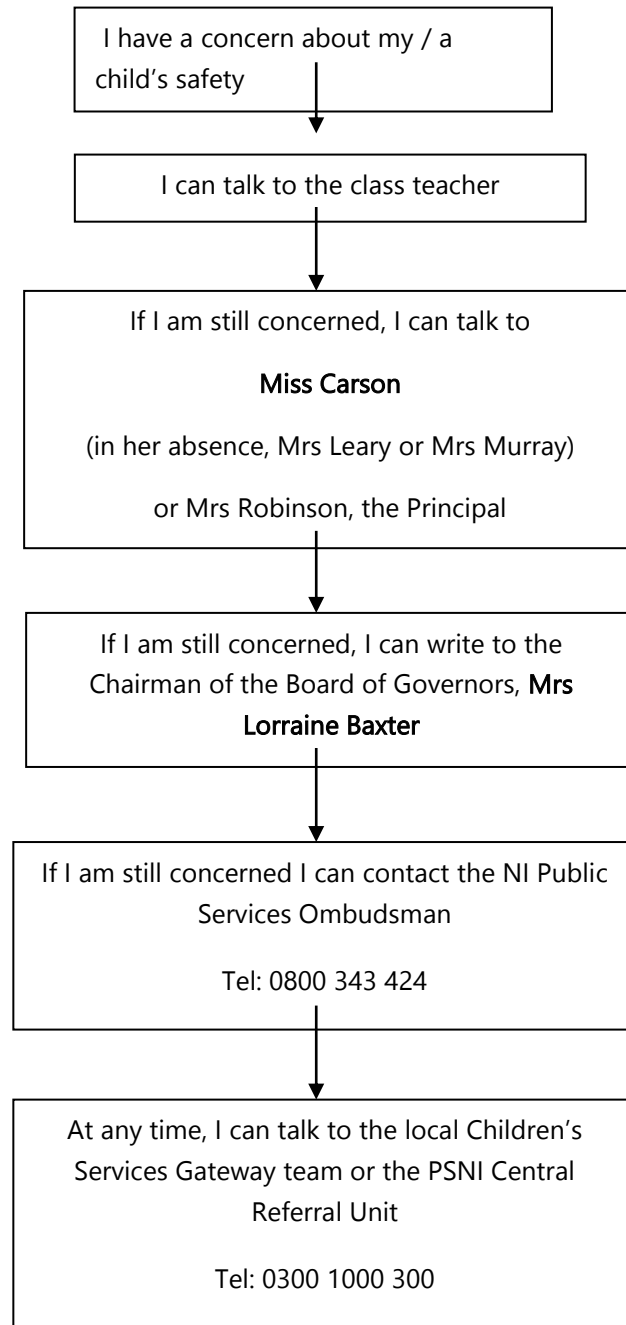
The primary responsibility for safeguarding and protection of children rests with parents who should feel confident about raising any concerns they have in relation to their child. The school should help parents / careers to understand its responsibility for the welfare of all children and young people in its care.

Parents can play their part in safeguarding by informing the school:

- if the child has a medical condition or educational need;
- if there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child;
- if there is any change in a child's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility;
- if there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school;
- if their child is absent, a note should be sent on the child's return to school explaining the absence. This assures the school that the parent/career knows about the absence. More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: [www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection)
- it is essential that the school has up to date contact details for the parent / career



## How a parent can raise concerns about a child's safety



#### **4.10 Child Protection Support Services (CPSS)**

The CPSS is a regional service for schools; it is based within the EA Directorate of Children and Young People's Services.

The CPSS primary role is to provide:

- Daily helpline to advise, guide and support DTs / DDTs / Principals in relation to concerns about individual children with safeguarding / child protection concerns and on wider policy and training matters
- Initial, refresher and cluster group training on child protection issues
- Support visit to schools where required
- Advice and guidance on assessing and managing children who pose a significant risk of harm to themselves, other pupils and staff
- Dissemination of new information on training, DE Circulars and guidance
- Support in developing or reviewing the school's child protection policy
- Follow up to ETI inspections where safeguarding / child protection is identified as an area for improvement
- Offer training to the Chairperson and Designated Governor for Child Protection in relation to their statutory safeguarding / child protection responsibilities
- Assist EA Human Resource Managers in dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other EA employees
- Liaise with Social Services and PSNI where appropriate

#### **5 Dealing with Child Protection Concerns**

Child abuse occurs in families from all social classes and cultures and in communities, agencies and organisations. Child abuse can manifest in a number of ways and can involve a combination of the forms of abuse. Staff must have an awareness and understanding of the nature and prevalence of different manifestations within their practice area.

It is always preferable to prevent abuse, or for intervention to take place at the earliest possible stage. Through their day-to-day contact with individual children, school staff are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms, change in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development.

A child in need of protection is a child who is at risk, or likely to suffer significant harm which can be attributed to a person(s) or organization, either by an act of commission or omission; or a child who has suffered or is suffering significant harm. 'Harm' means ill treatment or the impairment of development, and the question of whether harm is significant is determined in accordance with article 50(3) of the Children Order.

Staff should be alert to all types of abuse and to their legal obligations including reporting of offences. Observations of signs and symptoms of possible abuse can do no more than give rise to concern – they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. It must always be remembered that alternative medical, psychological or social explanations may exist for the signs and symptoms of possible abuse. However, staff should be aware of the possible implications of, and alert to, all such signs, particularly if they appear in combination or are repeated regularly.

Where a member of staff is concerned that abuse may have occurred, he/she must report this immediately to the Designated Teacher, Miss Carson.

It is imperative that any disclosure by a child, or concern that indicates a child may be at immediate risk, is reported immediately to the PSNI and Social Services to ensure that emergency protection measures are put in place. This is particularly important if there is a risk of the child at home.

**Child** – a child is a person under the age of 18 years as defined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

## **5.2 Types of Abuse**

Child abuse may take a number of forms, including:

**Neglect** – is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

**Physical Abuse** – is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the willful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. E.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

**Sexual Abuse** - occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**Emotional Abuse** - is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. 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 involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

**Exploitation** - is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, and 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.

\*All the above definitions are from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young people in Northern Ireland (2016)

### **5.3 Talking to Children where there are Concerns about Possible Abuse**

Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the non-teaching staff sees such signs, he/she should immediately bring them to the attention of either the class teacher or the Designated Teacher, and it may be appropriate for the necessary clarification to be carried out by the teacher.

Such clarification may reassure teachers that abuse has not occurred; but signs and symptoms which cause concern, while perhaps not a result of abuse, may nevertheless indicate that the child or his/her family is in need of intervention by statutory, voluntary or community based services through a 'child in need' referral.

Care must be taken in asking, and interpreting children's responses to, questions about indications of abuse. The same considerations apply when a child makes an allegation of abuse, or volunteers information which amounts to that. Staff should be aware that the way in which they talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings, and the extent of questioning should, therefore, be kept to a minimum:

- Staff should not ask leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind. Rather, staff should say, 'Tell me what has happened'
- Staff should actively listen to the child and not interrupt or try to interrupt if he/she is freely recalling significant events and as soon as possible afterwards make a record of

the discussion to pass on to the Designated Teacher, using the 'Note of Concern' from DE. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail.

- Any comment by the child, or by a parent /career, about how an injury occurred, should be written down, quoting words actually used
- Staff should not promise confidentiality, although they can and should reassure that information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know
- Staff should be aware that their note of the discussion may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings

All notes taken regarding the incident will be stored in an individual folder, stored in the secure Child Protection cabinet. **These notes are only available to the Safeguarding Team.**

#### **5.4 Child displaying Symptoms of, or school alerted to, Possible Abuse**

In all cases where symptoms displayed by a child give rise to concerns about possible abuse, or about the welfare of the child, the teacher or member of school staff should report these concerns to the Designated Teacher. A parent or career may also give information to a member of staff which gives rise to concern about possible abuse by someone outside the school, or by a person working in the school in a volunteer capacity. The person making the complaint should be advised of their responsibility to refer to the local Health and Social Care Trust Gateway Team. The staff member should also inform the designated teacher who will refer, if necessary to the appropriate statutory authorities.

In order to form a view on whether a child/children may indeed be being abused, or a risk of possible abuse, the Principal / DT may need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information, or from others who may have relevant information.

While such clarification will often help to confirm or allay concerns, ***it is not the responsibility of teachers and other education staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other careers.*** This is the responsibility of Children's Social Services and / or PSNI.

#### **5.5 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse made Against a Member of Staff**

Where a complaint about possible abuse is made against a member of staff of the school, the procedures in DE Circular 2015/13 should be followed.

In all decisions the child's welfare is the paramount consideration and the child should be listened to and his/her concerns taken seriously.

The Principal and BOGs have a duty of care for the welfare of pupils and any allegation needs to be effectively evaluated and managed. However, as employers, they also have a

duty of care to their staff and should ensure they provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation of abuse.

If an allegation about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the Designated Teacher, if he/she is not available) must be informed immediately. The procedures outlined below will apply (unless the complaint is about the Designated Teacher). Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils, and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Designated Teacher (or her deputy, if she is not available) must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that any necessary action is taken.

In either case, a thorough investigation will be carried out, by instigation of the normal Child Protection procedures.

Where the school carries out preliminary enquiries, these should have regard:

- First and foremost, to the welfare of the pupil and that of other pupils at the school
- To the efficient functioning of the school: and
- To the rights of the individual against whom the complaint has been made, especially his or her right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Where an allegation is made about a member of staff, and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the school's disciplinary procedures, a short summary of the record should also be entered by the Principal / DT into the Record of Child Abuse Complaints book, maintained for the purpose and kept in the Child Protection cabinet.

The summary should include:

- The date and brief details of the nature of the complaint
- By whom and against who it was made
- If the complaint was formally referred, to whom it was referred, and the date of the referral
- If the complaint was dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedures, a brief note of the outcome

The school's Record of Child Abuse Complaints book is made available to the Chairman of the Board of Governors annually, being signed off at the end of every academic year by the Chairperson and the Principal.

## **5.6 Process for Referral**

### **5.6.1 Context**

Responsibility for referral of suspected abuse cases lies with the Designated Teacher who will liaise and work closely with Social Services and PSNI.

### **5.6.2 Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI)**

UNOCINI is a framework used to enable agencies to communicate their concerns about children. It must be completed whenever staff wish to refer a child to children's social services for support, safeguarding or a fuller assessment of a child's needs.

If school is concerned that a child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm, then an urgent referral to Children's Social Services through the Gateway Service must be made. When an urgent referral is made by telephone, a UNOCINI must be completed and sent to social services within 24 hours.

Prior to making a referral to Social Services the consent of the parent/carers and /or the child (if they are competent to give this) will be sought. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put the child or others at increased risk or significant harm.

Non-urgent referrals ie 'child in need' **must** have the consent of the parents/carers and/or the young person and should be made using the UNOCINI.

The welfare of the child is paramount and, if parents / carers are not able to be contacted, school will not delay but progress with the referral to Social Services.

## **6 Specific Types of Abuse**

**6.1 Grooming** of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child's/young person's loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

**6.2 Child sexual exploitation (CSE)** is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for

something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017)

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity in return for something they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible 'rewards' OR 'benefits' such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging.

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. The abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis.

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the school's child protection policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

### **6.2.1 Identifying CSE**

#### **Potential Indicators**

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation
- Truancy / leaving school without permission
- Persistently going missing or returning late
- Receiving lots of texts / phone calls prior to leaving
- Change in mood – agitated / stressed
- Appearing distraught / disheveled or under the influence of substance
- Inappropriate sexualized behavior for age
- Physical symptoms e.g. bruising, bite marks
- Collected from school by unknown adult or taxi
- New peer groups
- Significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours
- Low self-esteem
- Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less)
- Self-harm and other expressions of despair
- Evidence or suspicion of substance abuse

While these indicators can be useful in identifying potential risk, their presence does not necessarily mean CSE is occurring. More importantly, nor does their absence mean it is not.



### **6.2.2 What to do**

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring should follow the school child protection policy and procedures, contacting Social Services and PSNI as soon as possible.

### **6.3 Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse**

Domestic and Sexual violence and abuse can have a profoundly negative effect on a child's emotional, psychological and social well-being. A child does not have to witness domestic violence to be adversely affected by it. Living in a violent or abusive domestic environment is harmful to children.

Domestic violence and abuse is defined as 'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.'

Sexual Violence and Abuse is defined as 'any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual /online perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).' (Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland A Seven Year Strategy: March 2016).

If it comes to the attention of school staff that Domestic Abuse, is or may be, affecting a child this will be passed on to the Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team and PSNI and to complete a UNOCINI referral form.

### **Operation Encompass**

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

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) 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 the school's key contact, Miss Carson (in her absence, Mrs Leary or Mrs Murray will take the call). 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 Miss Carson.

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

**6.4 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. FGM is a form of child abuse and, as such, teachers have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, through agreed established procedures set out in our school policy.

**6.5 Forced Marriage** is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in West Winds Primary we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

There is a clear distinction between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses. In forced marriages, one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage and duress is involved.

#### **6.6 Children who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour**

Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child's development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. As a school we support children and young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships.

Harmful sexualised behaviour is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when:

- There is no consent by the victim; and/or
- The perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim

Harmful sexualised behaviour can include:

- Using age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases
- Inappropriate touching
- Using sexual violence or threats
- Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older
- However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them e.g. if the older child is disabled

Harmful sexualised behaviour is primarily a child protection concern and will always require intervention. We will take guidance from DE Circular 2016/05 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people and seek advice from CPSS.

### **6.7 E-safety / Internet Abuse**

Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, social environments and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

In January 2014, the Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland (SBNI) published its report 'An exploration of e-safety messages to young people, parents and practitioners in Northern Ireland' which identified the associated risks around online safety under four categories:

- **Content** risks: the child or young person is exposed to harmful material
- **Contact** risks: the child or young person participates in adult initiated online activity.
- **Conduct** risks: the child or young person is a perpetrator or victim in peer-to-peer exchange.
- **Commercial** risks: the child or young person is exposed to inappropriate commercial advertising, marketing schemes or hidden costs.

At West Winds Primary, we have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of pupils accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The school's actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the pupils in the school or on school-organised activities.

## **6.8 Managing the Risks**

Children need to be educated about 'on-line' risks and become 'Internet Wise'; pupils need to know how to cope if they come across inappropriate material or situations on line and should be encouraged to seek help and advice when they need it without fear of censure or criminalization.

DE Circular 2016/27 provides schools with information on the characteristics of good online safety practice and recommended actions for schools to consider in developing or reviewing their online safety procedures.

The EA/C2K has acquired a filtered internet service for and on behalf of all pupils and staff in schools in Northern Ireland. At West Winds Primary, we work with the PSNI and outside agencies in engaging with children, staff and parents to share information, advice and guidance on the appropriate and safe use of digital technology.

**6.9 Sexting** is the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobile or over the internet. There are two aspects to Sexting:

### **6.9.1 Sexting between individuals in a relationship**

Pupils need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual relationship) and in these cases we will contact local police on 101 for advice and guidance. We may also seek advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service.

Please be aware that, while offences may technically have been committed by the child/children involved, the matter will be dealt with sensitively and considering all of the circumstances and it is not necessarily the case that they will end up with a criminal record. It is important that particular care is taken in dealing with any such cases. Adopting scare tactics may discourage a young person from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of a sexual image. Advice may be sought from CPSS.

### **6.9.2 Sharing an inappropriate image with an intent to cause distress**

If a pupil has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that it is not forwarded to anyone else. Schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted)) to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent.

If a young person has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures of the school will be followed.

## **7 Dealing with Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

### **7.1 Children with a Disability**

Children with disabilities (i.e. any child or young person who has a physical, sensory or learning impairment or a significant health condition) may be more vulnerable to abuse and those working with children with disabilities should be aware of any vulnerability factors associated with risk of harm, and any emerging child protection issues. Staff must be aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult.

### **7.2 Children with limited fluency in English**

As with children with a special educational need, children who are not fluent in English should be given the chance to express themselves to a member of staff or other professional with appropriate language/communication skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred.

Designated Teachers should work with their SEN coordinators along with school staff with responsibility for newcomer pupils, seeking advice from the EA's Inclusion and Diversity Service to identify and respond to any particular communication needs that a child may have. All schools should try to create an atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or pupils for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them.

### **7.3 Pre-school provision**

Many of the issues in the preceding paragraphs will be relevant to our young children who may have limited communication skills. In addition to the above, staff will follow our Intimate Care and Touch policies and procedures in consultation with the child's parent/carer

### **7.4 Gender Identity Issues / Sexual Orientation**

West Winds Primary strives to provide a happy environment where all children feel safe and secure. All pupils have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Young people and children from the LGBTQ community may face particular difficulties which could make them more vulnerable to harm. These difficulties could range from intolerance and homophobic bullying from others to difficulties for child themselves in exploring and understanding their sexuality. At such times, children may be more vulnerable to predatory advances from adults seeking to exploit or abuse them. This could impede a child's ability or willingness to raise concerns if they feel they are at risk or leave children exposed to contact with people who would exploit them.

As a staff working with children from the LGBT community, we will support them to appropriately access information and support on healthy relationships and to report any concerns or risks of abuse or exploitation.

### **7.5 Residential Settings**

Our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children also includes periods when they are in our care outside of the school setting. We will follow DE guidance on educational visits and school trips to ensure our current safeguarding policies are adhered to and that appropriate staffing levels are in place. Further information is available in our 'Code of Conduct' for Staff and Volunteers document.

## **8 Preventative Curriculum**

The statutory personal development curriculum requires schools to give specific attention to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers a medium to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours. (DE Circular 2017/04)

West Winds Primary seeks to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resiliencies of children so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through school assemblies and there is a permanent child protection notice board at the front and side entrances and posters within each classroom, which provide advice and displays child helpline numbers.

Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issues:

- Outside agencies are invited into school to deliver safe guarding programmes, for example ChildLine and NSPCC.
- **PSNI** - Our community police officers are regular visitors to school, calling in with the Principal / Vice Principal on an in-formal basis or for arranged visits to speak with the children. We organise these talks not only to build good relations between the children and the PSNI but to educate the children on key areas of safety. The community officers attend, when possible, our parent seminars to maintain links with parents on an informal basis.
- We have a **Buddy/Peer Support Scheme** in Primary 7. The scheme creates an opportunity for children to develop their self-esteem, communication skills and understanding of how helping others can make for a better school community.

The scheme involves helping Key Stage 1 children in the dinner hall and playing games with them in the playground. In Key Stage 2, the Buddies have a responsibility for solving minor disputes. Buddies will also be available to play with children, at either Key Stage, who are feeling left out or lonely. They will look out for new children coming to school and help them with finding their way around. Buddies will also listen to any worries or problems children may have.

Buddies receive training with listening skills and how to solve disputes from NSPCC and Mr Turkington, Head of Key Stage 2. They learn about situations they can handle and to know when an issue is too big for them that they need to involve adult help.

- **Education Welfare Service** -Termly meetings are held between the VP and our Education Welfare Officer (EWO). Together we work to monitor and promote regular attendance among the children and refer children into the service whose attendance has fallen below 85%.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) highlights the right of a child to be heard. At West Winds Primary we hold this as a central principle in our Child Protection Policy and Procedures, and foster an environment in which every child feels they have someone to talk to.

- **'Circle Time'** is a key element to our school's pastoral care implementation. It is a time for pupils and teacher to discuss issues affecting self-esteem and self-confidence, while addressing personal safety matters such as stranger danger and drug awareness. For example, in Key Stage 1, issues such as friendships, feelings and being kind may be explored. Key Stage 2 may investigate and discuss matters such as alcohol and drug abuse and its implications on families and friends. 'Circle Time' provides an opportunity for children to talk through any problems they may be having in school or at home and perhaps to work through their problem with their friends and teacher in the security of their own class environment. Our staff are aware that a child may make a disclosure during 'Circle Time', or as a response to discussions during 'Circle Time'. If a disclosure is made, the teacher should report immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, who will advise them on the course of action to be undertaken.
- We offer a counseling service provided by **Imagine If**; the counselling service provides 1 to 1 counselling and support sessions for children as well as the opportunity for group sessions and parent work.

### **8.1 Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

RSE is covered within the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding area of learning. Our school policy on RSE outlines how it is addressed within the curriculum. Guidance is also sought from DE Circular 2015/22 – Relationships and Sexuality Education.

### **8.2 Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse**

The Department of Health and the Department of Justice produced a new strategy (March 2016) tackling domestic and sexual violence and abuse. The strategy aims to help improve understanding of domestic and sexual violence and stopping it happen in the first place by helping people change how they act, supporting victims and holding people responsible for their actions.

There are 5 key strands in the strategy; DE commitments relate to strand 2, '**Prevention and Intervention**':

- Teachers will have the necessary skills to teach about sensitive subjects, including child abuse, and domestic and sexual violence and abuse
- Teachers will be alert to pupils experiencing distress and trained to respond appropriately
- Teachers will have access to a range of age appropriate and evaluated resources to support the teaching of sensitive subjects

While it is important that those at risk are identified and interventions are put in place, it is equally important that children are provided with information and skills in building healthy behaviours and relationships. Children should be provided with the opportunity to develop good mental health and emotional resilience to enable them to identify abuse and exercise prevention skills

- Primary 4 children are involved in a 10 week **Protective Behaviours Programme** called '**Helping Hands for Children**'. The programme has been designed by Women's Aid and our in-school facilitators are Mrs Beattie, Mr Turkington, Mrs Seeds and Mrs Dalzell. The programme teaches children to express their feelings; make choices and solve problems; develop a strong sense of themselves and an ability to express their own wants and needs. It is a scheme used to develop skills and abilities, which are vital for personal safety, stress reduction and promotion of self-worth. The programme raises children's awareness of and promotes their rights in relation to safety and support.
- Primary 5 are involved in '**Roots of Empathy**'; at the heart of this programme are a community baby and parent who visits the classroom throughout the school year. A trained Roots of Empathy Instructor (Mrs Dalzell) coaches pupils to observe the baby's development and to label the baby's feelings. In this experiential learning, the baby is the "Teacher" and a lever, which the Instructor uses to help children identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others. This lays the foundation for safer and more caring classrooms, where children are the "Changers."

Children in Roots of Empathy classrooms

- develop executive functioning skills
- develop emotional literacy
- develop emotional regulation
- develop resilience
- learn to challenge cruelty and injustice
- learn to form consensus, contributing to a culture of caring in the classroom

## **9 Child Protection: Record Keeping in School**

In accordance with DE guidance we must consider and develop clear guidelines for the recording, storage, retention and destruction of both manual and electronic records where they relate to child protection concerns.



In order to meet these requirements all child protection records, information and confidential notes concerning pupils who attend / have attended West Winds Primary are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher and Principal have access to them. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from the child's date of birth plus 30 years. If information is held electronically, whether on a laptop or on a portable memory device, all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected.

These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

If records are removed from the school premises e.g. taken to a case conference or on foot of a court order, a record should be kept of when information is removed, by whom, for what purpose, and when it is returned.

## **10. Other Policies – school specific**

### **10.1 Overview**

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. The child protection policy therefore compliments and supports a range of other school policies including:

Anti-Bullying Policy	Data Protection Policy
Attendance Policy	Educational Visits
Positive Behaviour Policy	I.C.T. / E-Safety Policy
Code of Conduct	First Aid and Administration of Medicines
Complaints Policy	Intimate Care / Touch
Health and Safety Policy	Records Management policy (TBW)
Special Educational Needs	Relationships and Sexuality Education (TBW)
Whistleblowing Policy (TBW)	

\*\*TBW – to be written

### **10.2 Physical Contact with Pupils / Safe Handling / Use of Reasonable Force**

All staff have a responsibility to maintain confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. Integral to this is a clear understanding of standards of behaviour expected and in particular the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with

pupils. School staff must accept that all physical contact can be open to scrutiny and that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued.

Staff should use their professional judgement at all times. As a general rule, when physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Appropriate physical contact may occur most often with younger children e.g. physical comforting can give a welcome reassurance to a distressed child.

In extreme cases, a staff member might have to restrain a pupil physically to prevent him / her from committing an offence, from causing injury to him/herself, to others or to property, or otherwise from behaving in an undisciplined way. Staff are empowered to use reasonable force in these circumstances, either on school premises or anywhere else where the member of staff is in lawful charge of the pupil concerned. In such instances, no more than the minimum necessary force should be used. Staff should act on the DE and EA's guidelines on the use of reasonable force and should seek to avoid causing injury to the pupil.

## COVID 19

Safeguarding and child protection are as important now as they have ever been. With lockdowns and social distancing measures in place, it is difficult for adults and agencies to keep in regular contact with children and check on their welfare.

School closures have seen vulnerable children deprived of an important space that offered them safety, stability and a sense of normality. Many vulnerable children were stripped of the relationships with teachers and friends that often, were the only healthy attachments they had. During lockdowns, children may have been at higher risk of abuse and neglect in the family environment. Typically, school staff are the primary reporters of abuse and neglect to Social Services and the PSNI, and as such, school staff should be ready for an increase in their pastoral responsibilities and safeguarding referrals. Staff should follow our clear, step-by-step child protection procedures (outlined above) in the event of reports, or suspicions, of any acts of physical, emotional, or sexual violence or neglect.

