

# **ST Brigid's Primary School**



## **Child Protection /Safeguarding Policy**

## **St Brigid's Primary School Policy and Procedures on Child Protection and Safeguarding**

We in St Brigid's School have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safeguarding of the pupils in our charge, and we will carry out this duty through our Pastoral Care Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy, Reasonable Force/Safe Handling Policy, Safe Use of the Internet Policy, Intimate Care Policy, PDMU Policy, RSE Policy and our Special Educational/Inclusion Policy which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. As part of our safeguarding procedures we seek to offer support to families with early identification and early intervention to meet the needs of children. This may include engaging with local family support services /programmes, including the local Family Support Hub, to help the family access the support that they require at the time. In our child centred approach we seek to protect/safeguard our pupils by helping them learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe and to enable them to report any concerns to an appropriate adult. We also ensure the accurate recording of incidents as outlined in our Safe Disposal of Records Schedule and in our Child Protection/Safeguarding Records Management Policy and in our Record Retention and Destruction Policy.

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staff of our school has also adopted a Code of Conduct for our behaviour towards pupils. This code is set out in the Appendix to this policy statement.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection/Safeguarding is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school - teachers, non-teaching staff, parents/carers and volunteers - has 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, safety and mental health of the child, and the welfare of each child is our**

**paramount consideration.** The problem 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 criminal offences. We will ensure that our response to risk of harm is **proportionate, timely, professional, legal and ethical and that there is an effective and coordinated multi agency response.**

### **Responsibilities of Principal and Board of Governors**

- The Designated Governor for Child Protection, **Mrs P Martin**, will meet with the Principal and Designated Teacher on a regular basis. The Board of Governors will be informed of the number and nature of incidents through a regular Child Protection Report, which is a standing item on the BoG agenda.
- An annual child protection/safeguarding summary is also provided to the Board of Governors
- Records of incidents on child and staff files will be kept for a minimum of 5 years after the date on which they occurred. Children's records will be stored securely for 30 years after the date of birth. The details of this disposal are outlined in our Disposal of Records Schedule and in our Records Management Policy.
- The Principal will follow the procedures as specified by DENI, Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff DE Circular 2015/13 where a complaint of alleged child abuse is made regarding a member of staff. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be consulted and a decision to take no further action or immediate referral will be made.
- Records
  - (i) A complaint against a school staff member where no further action is deemed necessary - Principal will place a brief record of complaint as a note of concern on the relevant pupil's Child Protection File and in the staff member's file
  - (ii) A complaint against a member of staff where a formal referral is deemed necessary - Note of concern will be signed and dated by the Principal, countersigned by the Designated Teacher (where neither is the subject of the allegation) and retained in the school on the files of both the child (Child Protection File) and member of staff concerned (Staff Member File). An entry will also be made in the Record of Child Abuse Complaints. If the

staff member is not exonerated, then this record is kept indefinitely.

(iii) School record of Child Abuse Complaints Book, Child Protection File and Staff Member File will be kept in a secure place. Child Abuse Complaints Book will be available to the Board of Governors annually and will be available to ETI during inspections.

- If an allegation is made about the Principal this should be reported immediately to the Chair of the Board of Governors, Deputy Chairperson, Designated Governor for Child Protection and the person appointed to be the Lead Individual, and the record retained in the school, on both the child's Child Protection File and the file of the staff member concerned.
- If after subsequent investigation the staff member is exonerated then the record on the staff member's file is expunged, the record in the Record of Child Abuse Complaints Book is struck through with a brief explanation. Record on the child's file should be noted with the outcome of the investigation, and should stand until the child's D.O.B +30 years.
- The Principal and Board of Governors will ensure that each member of the school's staff will comply with the Code of Conduct for employees which has been drawn up to reflect DE Circular 2016/20

### **Recruitment of Staff, Volunteers and Sports Coaches**

In accordance with the procedures for checking on possible criminal backgrounds of Persons with Access to Children (Appendix 12 DENI Child Protection Document) St Brigid's Primary School will ensure that all persons working in close proximity with children, in either paid or unpaid capacity will have to agree to the vetting procedures of Access NI. Examples of such people include all school staff, peripatetic teachers, CASS officers, sports coaches, and staff working in training schemes, health professionals working in school and parent volunteers.

### **What is Significant Harm?**

The Children (NI) Order 1005 defines 'harm' as ill treatment or impairment of health or development. The Order states that 'ill treatment' includes sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment which are physical and forms which are not; 'health' means physical or mental health

and development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. There is no evidence of significant harm as is judged on a case by case basis.

### **What is Safeguarding?**

Safeguarding is the promotion and preventative activity which enables children to grow up safely and securely. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection.

### **Forms of Child Abuse**

We use the following definition:

#### **Neglect**

- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to cause 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 medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision.
- It may also include non-organic failure to thrive.
- Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

#### **Physical 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, suffocation, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriate giving drugs to control behaviour.

#### **Sexual 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 watching

sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a 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 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 harm.
- Emotional abuse may involve bullying including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones -by a child's peers. (see E-Safety/Safe Use of Internet Policy and Anti Bullying Policy)

### **Exploitation**

This is the intentional ill treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child, or to take unfair advantage of a child/situation for personal gain.

### **Domestic Violence**

The intentional and persistent physical or emotional abuse of a woman, or of a woman and her children in a way that causes pain, distress or injury.

(Definition by Woman's Aid)

Other forms of abuse can include child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and children who display harmful sexual behaviour.

**However, a child protection record might be commenced if there is evidence of a safeguarding risk of, for example, self-harm, suicidal thoughts or behaviours that cause concern.**

### **Bullying**

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff is 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 victim and bully will be personally contacted immediately if bullying behaviour is identified.

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

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of any privileges or position of responsibility he/she holds in the school. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff is satisfied that the problem has stopped.

If a pupil's bullying persists, the second stage will be to instigate the child protection procedure described below. (See Anti-Bullying Policy)

**Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse (see Figure 1)**

**The designated teacher for child protection is Mrs Lloyd.** In her absence, **Mr Artherton**, Principal, will assume responsibility for all child protection matters.

If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, **the member of staff must act promptly (within 24 hours).**

**He/she should not investigate** - this is a matter for the Social Services - but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with her, and complete a Note of Concern.

The designated teacher will discuss the matter with the principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record is made. This Note of Concern is signed and dated by both parties and along with any other details is placed in the pupil's Child Protection File. This will confirm that the information is accurate.

The principal, in consultation with the designated teacher, will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. **If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral through the appropriate Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland form (UNOCINI).** If this concern is violent or sexually abusive in nature but not a case of neglect, then the P.S.N.I will be automatically informed by the school through the **CENTRAL REFERRAL UNIT**. Where there are concerns that the child is in immediate danger Social Services will be contacted immediately with the UNOCINI form to follow. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The principal may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Board's and the CCMS's Designated Officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. **The safety of the child is our first priority.**

Where there are concerns about possible abuse, the principal will inform:

- the Social Services (Gateway Team - 0300 1000 300/02892501227)
- Designated Officer [EA SE Region] - Colum Boal/Alison Casey
- Designated Officer [CCMS] - Susan Sullivan
- Central Referral Unit (PSNI) - 02890 259299(or 101 extension 30299)
- New Regional Centralised Out of Hours Service -02895 049999
- Complete the appropriate sections of the UNOCINI form

**(This will be done in an envelope marked 'CONFIDENTIAL - CHILD PROTECTION')**

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the principal (or the designated teacher, if he is not available)

must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the designated teacher). Record of this is retained in school on the pupil's Child Protection File and the staff member's file. It is also recorded in the Record of Child Abuse Book. 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 must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and other relevant bodies as already outlined previously and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken. (*see Figure 3*)

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

If a parent wishes to make a complaint on an issue regarding child protection they should follow the procedure as set out in *Figure 1 This information is not only available on our school website and in our Child Protection/Safeguarding booklet but is displayed at the entrance to school.*

It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. In the interests of the child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told.

It is important that parents communicate with the school any concerns they have regarding their child's welfare. At all times these issues will be handled sensitively and as far as possible with confidentiality.

**Confidentiality is of utmost importance and such sensitive information will be shared on a need to know basis at all times.**

A **Safeguarding Team** consisting of our Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mr Brendan Smyth, Governor responsible for Child

Protection/Safeguarding, Mrs Patricia Martin, the Principal, Mr Philip Artherton, Designated Teacher, Mrs Ann Lloyd and another staff member, Mrs Ciara Mc Cavera to support the DT will be responsible for implementing and maintaining the procedures outlined in this policy.

Chair of Board of Governors

Principal

Mr B Smyth

Mr P Artherton

Appendices

June 2017

## Child Protection How A Parent Can Make A Complaint

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



I can talk to the class teacher



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the designated teacher for child protection - Ann Lloyd



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Principal, Mr Artherton



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mr B Smyth



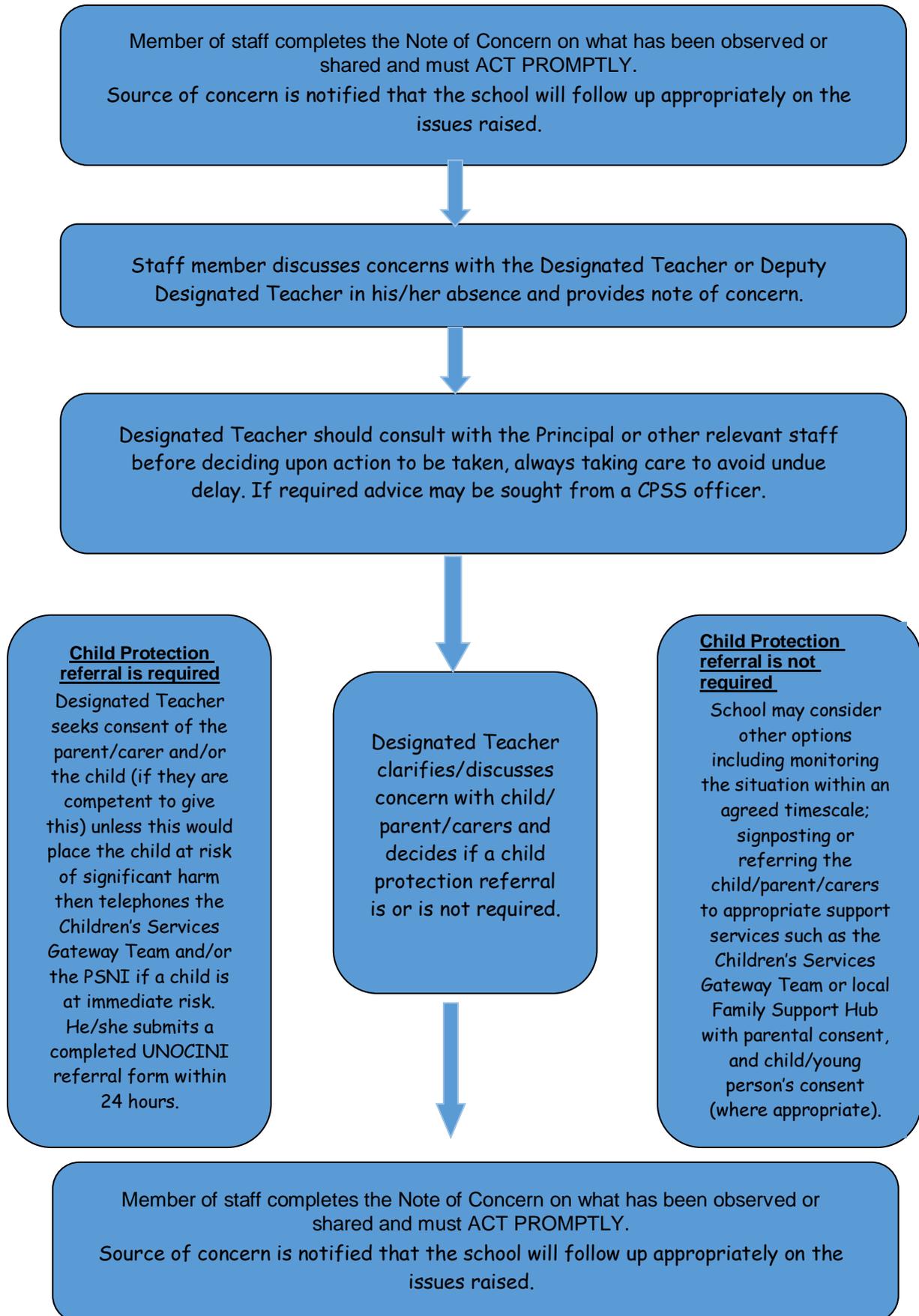
If I am still concerned I can refer the case to the Children's Ombudsman 0800 343 424



*At any time,  
I can talk to the social worker through Gateway services tel: 0300  
1000 300  
or the PSNI through the Central Referral Unit- 028 90259299 or 101  
extension 30299.*

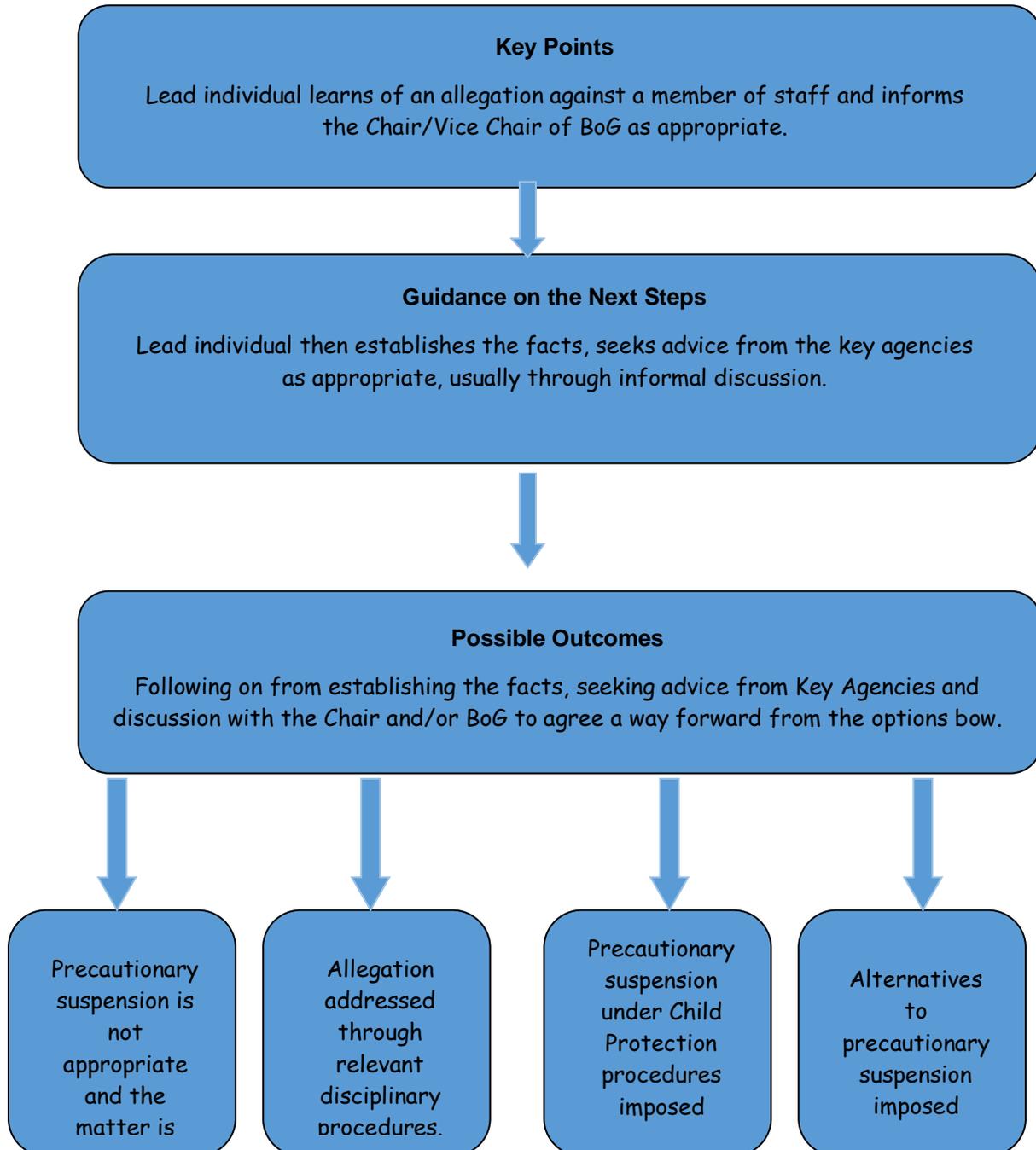
## Appendix 2

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



## Appendix 3

### Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff



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