

Child Protection Policy

Rationale

We in St Patrick's Academy have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge. We will carry out this duty through our Pastoral Care Policy, which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential, and, at the same time, be valued for their unique talents and abilities.

All of our staff have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staff have adopted a Code of Practice for our behaviour towards our pupils.

General Principles

The principles and philosophy which underpin our work with young people are those established in the 'UN Convention of the Rights of the Child' (UK Agreement 1991) and enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (effective from November 1996). In particular, the principle we support is that every young person has the fundamental right to be safe from harm and to be shown proper care of their physical, emotional and spiritual well being, by those looking after them.

The following principles form the basis for effective child protection activity and underpin the guidance we follow:

- The young person's welfare must always be paramount; this overrides all other considerations. Where a young person is disabled or has special needs these must be taken into consideration.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting young people and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict, the young person's interests must always come first.
- Young people have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions which may affect their lives. Where a young person has a disability, specialist assistance should be sought to achieve this.
- Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters which affect their family.
- Action taken to protect the young person (including investigation) should not in itself be abusive by causing the young person unnecessary distress or further harm.
- Intervention should not deal with the young person in isolation; the young person's needs should be considered in the context of the family. Agencies' actions must be considered and well informed so that they are sensitive to, and take account of, the young person's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture, race and any special needs.

- Where it is necessary to protect a young person from further abuse, alternatives which do not involve moving the young person and which minimise disruption of the family should be explored.

Aims

- To introduce procedures in the school to deal with Child Protection concerns as directed by the SELB Child Protection Procedures, DENI Circular 1999/10 Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 Guidance and the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures.
- To make staff and parents aware of the referral procedure within the school. The Designated Teacher is Mrs M. McMahon. The deputy designated teacher is Mrs M. Connolly. The Chairman of the Board of Governors is Mrs M Ferris.
- To help our pupils learn about the risks of possible abuse, to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and to acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe. This Code of Practice is set out in the Appendix to this policy statement.

St Patrick's Academy recognises the five main responsibilities in the areas of Child Protection. These are in the areas of:

1. Prevention
2. Recognition
3. Response
4. Referral
5. Confidentiality and Record Keeping.

Parents will be made aware of St Patrick's Academy's responsibilities and procedures and we hope that they will support us in our practice.

1. Prevention

In St Patrick's Academy we offer a supportive environment to our pupils who **are** being abused, **have been** abused and **may** be abused in the future. All young people are vulnerable.

St Patrick's Academy has developed and provides a 'child protection ethos' and a preventive curriculum. We offer our pupils an alternative model to violent or abusive behaviour and alternative methods of responding. We aim to involve the whole school in creating a 'listening school'.

St Patrick's Academy offers protection on two levels.

- Immediate protection – creating a listening environment that makes it easier for young people to share their concerns
- Long term protection, enhancing self esteem and encouraging social skills, breaking the cycle of abusive behaviour.

The Board of Governors ensures that the curriculum includes a programme for young people on personal protection. When it is appropriate to deliver sex education, management will ensure that the programme is consistent with guidance from the Department of Education.

The Board of Governors ensures that St Patrick's Academy has, and follows, the Code of Conduct drawn up for all members of staff, towards the young people in our school. This Code of Conduct covers all activities organised in and by the school, whether on the premises or elsewhere.

We ensure that persons other than our school staff who are invited as leaders/helpers on educational visits, residential visits or other out of school educational activities are subject to vetting procedures in keeping with the current arrangements for the care and protection of our young people.

We will ensure that we will provide effective management for our staff through adequate training and supervision.

2. Recognition

We use the following definitions:

- **Neglect:** the persistent or severe neglect of a young person, or the failure to protect a young person from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the young person's health or development, including non organic failure to thrive.
- **Physical abuse:** physical injury to a young person, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
- **Sexual abuse:** the sexual exploitation of a young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification; the involvement of young people in sexual

activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles.

- **Emotional abuse:** Persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a young person.

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in St Patrick's Academy. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. See Anti Bullying Policy.

3. Response

In the event of an allegation of child abuse the member of staff will:

- Listen to the young person and accept what is said
- Record statements
- Explain what has to be done next and to whom the member of staff will have to talk
- Reassure the young person he/she has done the right thing to talk about it
- Refer information to the designated teacher.

4. Referral

Mrs M McMahan is the designated member of staff for Child Protection. In her absence Mrs M Connolly will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

If a young person makes a disclosure to a member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a young person, **the member of staff must act promptly.**

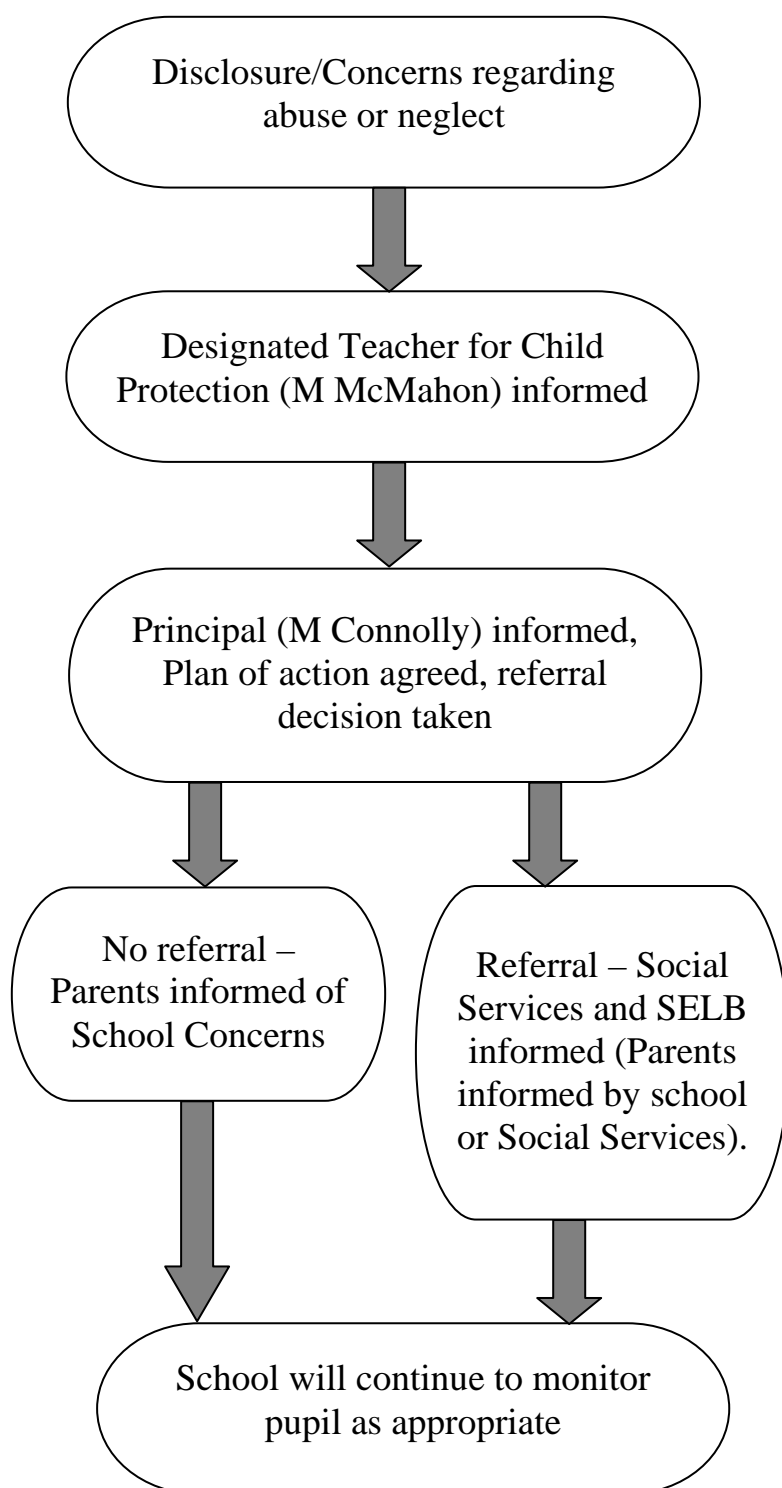
The **member of staff should not investigate** – this is a matter for Social Services – but should report immediately to the designated member of staff to discuss the matter with her and make full notes.

The designated member of staff 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.

The Principal, in consultation with the designated member of staff, will decide whether, in the best interests of the young person, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. **If there are concerns that the young person may be at risk, the Principal is obliged to make a referral.** Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Principal may seek advice from the Designated Officers from SELB 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 young person is our first priority.**

Child Protection Summary for Parents/Guardians



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 members need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told. The Pastoral Team in St. Patrick's Academy will update the School Child Protection Policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary, and review it annually.

Allegations against a member of staff

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff the Principal (or designated member of staff, if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply unless the complaint is about the Principal or the designated member of staff. The Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mrs M Ferris, will also be informed immediately.

Allegations against the Principal

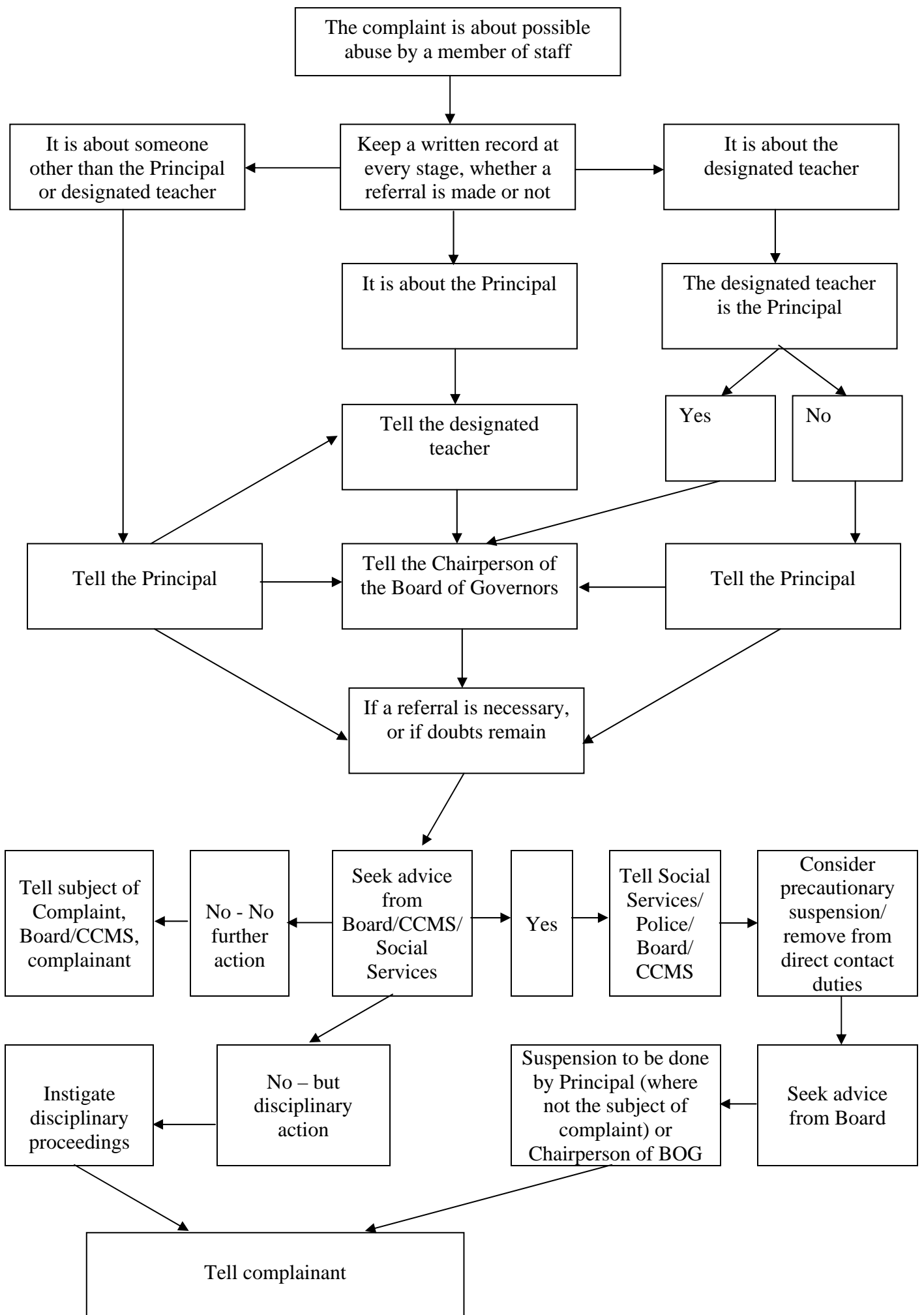
If a complaint is made against the Principal, the designated member of staff must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and he will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

Allegations against the designated member of staff

Any complaints must be referred to the Principal.

Suspension from duties

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.



5. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

Confidentiality

For reasons of confidentiality the only people who need to know are;
Mrs M.McMahon (Designated member of staff)
Mrs M.Connolly (Deputy Designated member of staff)
Relevant Head of Year
Relevant Form Teacher.

Record Keeping

All records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These only identify the young person by initials and date of birth. These records are kept separate from any other file which is held on the young person.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral, or under the school's disciplinary procedures, a summary is entered on a Record of Abuse Complaints. This entry, which will contain details of the complaint, will be made available to the Board of Governors at least annually.

Staff In-Service

St Patrick's Academy is committed to in service training for all staff. Each member of staff will receive Child Protection training on Policy and Procedures.

Monitoring and Evaluation

St Patrick's Academy will update this policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary, and review it annually.

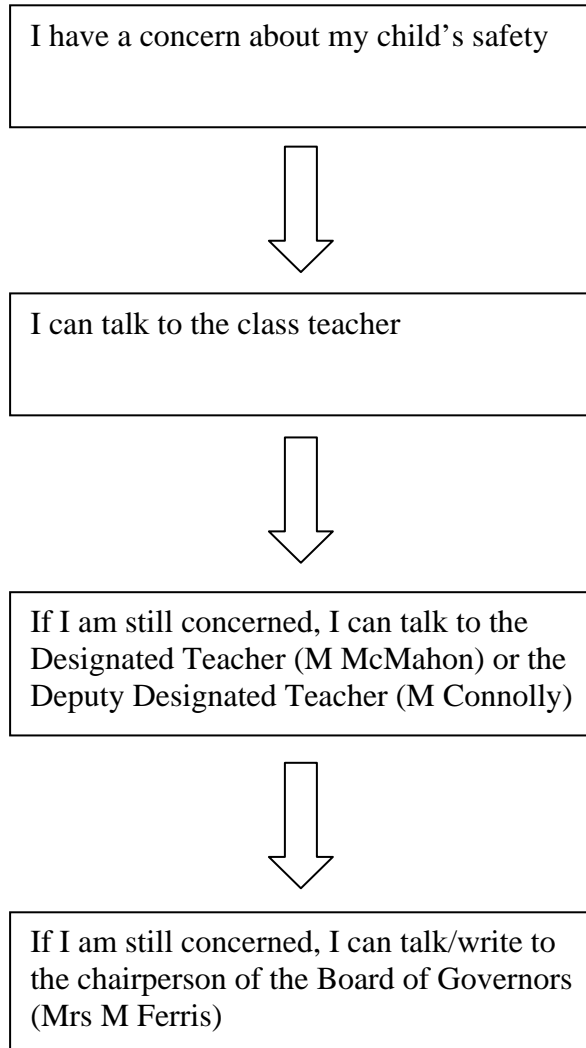
Signed: _____

Chairman of Board of Governors November 2009

To be reviewed November 2010

The school welcomes any comments from parents regarding this and all school policies. Parents are reminded that they can view school policies on the school website (www.stpatricksacademy.org.uk). Several policies are currently being updated and we welcome parental comment on them. The school website also has a section dedicated to parental concerns. Suggestions and comments are also welcomed in relation to this part of the site.

How a Parent Can Make a Complaint



Code of Conduct for staff

Private meetings with pupils

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

Physical Contact with Pupils

- (a) As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- (b) Physical contact which may be misconstrued by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided. Such contact can include well intentioned informal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, which if repeated with an individual pupil, could be misconstrued, as well as more obvious and more intimate contact which should never occur.
- (c) There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and re-assurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen by others present, to be normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time.
- (d) Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with pupils from time to time in the course of their teaching, for example when showing a pupil how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment or while demonstrating a move or exercise during games or P.E. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted by the pupil.
- (e) Heads of Departments in schools may well think it sensible to draw up their own guidelines for the use of areas such as photographic darkrooms which cover the particular circumstances of their schools.
- (f) Staff who have to administer first-aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact in the circumstances could be misconstrued.

- (g) Following any incident where a 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 Principal of the school. This would apply especially in a case where a member of staff had been obliged to restrain a child physically to prevent his/her from inflicting injury to others or self injury.
- (h) Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting such as a ski-trip, outdoor education camp or extended visit away from home, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment.

Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

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

Relationships and Attitudes

Staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, particularly when teachers of either sex are dealing with adolescent students.

Conclusion

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

From time to time, however, it is wise for all staff to review their teaching styles, relationships with pupils and their manner and approach to individual pupils, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, pupils or parents.