

SHIMNA INTEGRATED COLLEGE

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This document is consistent with guidance issued by the Department of Education and advice provided by the South Eastern Education and Library Board.

1. Introduction

We in Shimna College have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the students in our charge, and we will carry out this duty through 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 young people can learn and develop to their potential. One way in which we seek to protect our students is 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.

All members of the college staff, members of the Board of Governors and volunteers are subject to appropriate background checks (AccessNI). The employees of all contractors recommended by the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) for providing services in our college have been PSNI checked, in addition contractors employed by the college or their employees will operate according to the college's child protection procedures. It should be noted that the college sends a child protection statement to all contractors prior to them coming on site to carry out work [*See Appendix 1*]. The staff has also adopted a Code of Practice regarding their behaviour towards pupils [*See Appendix 2*]. The purpose of the following procedures is to protect our students by ensuring that everyone who works in our college - teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers - has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a student is suspected. The overriding concern of all caring adults in the college must be the care, welfare and safety of each student, in their care. 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 a criminal offence.

In our college, we recognise child abuse to include neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and bullying. The college has a comprehensive policy on bullying, indicating the seriousness with which it takes this highly distressing and damaging form of abuse which is not tolerated in our school.

2. Designated Child Protection Personnel

- The designated staff member is **Danella Goodman Telephone 4372 6107**
- The deputy designated staff member is **Aine Harrison Telephone 43726107**
- The designated member of the Board of Governors is **Patricia Quinn**
- The SEELB designated officer is **Alison Casey, SEELB HQ, Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast BT 16 2HS. Telephone 9056 6402 Fax 9056 6377**

The responsibilities of the designated staff member are:

- liaising with other members of staff, particularly the form teachers;
- liaising with the external support agencies such as the Education Welfare Service, the Social Services and the PSNI and voluntary agencies such as the NSPCC and Save the Children;
- overseeing the planning of curricular provision in relation to child protection and abuse issues;
- monitoring curricular provision in relation to sex education and the appropriateness of teaching materials being used and the teaching strategies employed by teachers across all subjects;
- organising child protection training and support for staff and governors;
- acting as a child protection contact point for staff, parents and the community and
- dealing with all matters concerning maintaining the child protection register

3. Confidentiality

Although the relationships that staff have with their students is based on trust and often confidentiality, they have a professional responsibility to share relevant information in relation to the protection of students with other professionals from external support and investigative agencies. They have a legal responsibility to report sexual abuse. Staff cannot promise confidentiality and no promise can or should be made to a student or anyone else giving information about possible abuse. All records of information relating to child abuse held by the college will be appropriately confidential.

4. Child Abuse Complaints and Referral Procedures

All complaints in relation to suspected or alleged child abuse made against students, staff members, or someone other than a staff member eg volunteer or member of the Board of Governors, will be treated seriously. The procedures for dealing with such complaints are set out clearly in the guidance provided by the Department of Education. The college will rigorously follow these procedures. *Referral procedures are displayed on the staff notice board.*

5. Record Keeping

The college keeps proper records, dated and signed, of all complaints, or information received, and all concerns about possible abuse noted by staff. Members of staff who have received information, or have concerns, about possible abuse should record on the child protection disclosure form:

- the nature of the information;
- who gave it;
- the time, date and circumstances; and
- where the concern relates to signs or symptoms of possible abuse, a description of these.

The principal or designated staff member will supplement the record with:

- details of any advice sought, from whom and when;
- the decision about referral to Social Services;
- if so, how, when and by whom this was done; and
- if not, reasons for not making a referral.

All records relating to child protection are kept separately from other college records in a locked filing cabinet to which only the principal and the designated staff members have initial access. In the case of an investigation into a child abuse incident, the records will be accessible on request to the professionals involved in the case.

6. Staff Responsibilities [All members of staff are acquainted with the Staff Code of Conduct *[See Appendix 2]*

In dealing with alleged child abuse, staff **must**:

- take the matter seriously;
- listen respectfully to the person making the allegation;
- use the college procedures for making their factual oral/written reports;
- act in a professional manner at all times;
- provide the necessary support at the time of disclosure; and
- act to ensure the protection, safety and welfare of our students.

Staff **must not**:

- investigate allegations;
- promise confidentiality;
- be judgemental or make value judgements;
- interrogate students or ask leading questions. Where members of staff suspect child abuse in any form, they must discuss their concerns with a designated staff member and act on the outcomes of such discussions.

In relation to day/field trips and residentials, the staff in charge must ensure the protection, safety and students at all times. Thus, it is important that they:

- secure the approval of parents/guardians for their child to participate in the event and the associated activities e.g. swimming, canoeing etc;
- provide parents with sufficiently detailed information about the event;
- undertake careful and detailed advance planning including a specific risk assessment using only the approved college documentation;
- ask parents for their child's relevant medical details, food allergies etc;
- ensure that the students are properly supervised at all times;
- deal with observed or reported bullying incidents immediately;
- ensure suitable sleeping and toilet provision if the group includes boys and girls;
- ensure that instructors are properly qualified;
- record details of any accident and report it to the college and the relevant parents/guardians; and
- follow the college procedures in relation to an alleged or suspected child abuse incident.

Those departments engaged in field trips and residentials will adhere to their departmental policies in relation to such activities.

7. Sporting and Swimming Activities

It is important that members of the physical education department and others involved in sporting and swimming activities:

- take all possible measures to ensure the safety and protection of students when engaged

in physical contact, outdoor pursuits and swimming activities;

- undertake risk assessments using the approved college documentation;
- take measures to ensure that students are not bullied in the context of sporting activities;
- ensure that students are able to dress as discretely as possible for sporting activities;
- do not participate in physical contact sports with students;
- ensure that all accidents and injuries to students are recorded and that the parents are informed;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact with students; and
- ensure that any sports and swimming instructor they may use are properly qualified for the task.

Members of the Physical Education department will take full account of any advice provided by the Northern Ireland Sports Council in relation to child protection matters.

8. Mobile Phones, Computers and Cameras

a. Mobile Phones

Although students may bring mobile phones to college, they may not use them during class. If students are caught using their phones during teaching time, the phone will be taken from them and kept for collection by a parent. The sending of offensive text messages, bullying by text and the taking and sending of inappropriate mobile photographs will be treated as a serious offence and may lead to suspension.

b. Computers

Members of staff will implement the colleges' Internet Policy. They will monitor carefully the student's use of college computers to ensure that they are not sending offensive emails or logging on to adult or other inappropriate chat rooms and web sites. The abuse of the use of computers by students will be treated as a serious offence and may lead to suspension.

c. Cameras

Students may use digital or other cameras for course work or for social purposes on a residential. They may not use them to take photographs of their peers or others without their permission. If students are caught taking such photographs, the camera will be taken from them and retained for collection by a parent/guardian. The abuse of the camera in this way will be treated as a serious offence and may lead to suspension. The following should be noted with respect of taking photographs:

- It is an offence for anyone to take indecent pictures of children and young people under 18 years of age. (Sexual Offences Act 2003)
- The offence of taking indecent pictures of children and young people under 18 years of age can apply in a situation where a child or young person uses a mobile phone to take rude pictures of others under 18 years of age.

d. Blogs & Websites

The college takes very seriously the protection and security of all members of the Shimna community. Consequently, students and staff members are not permitted to use college-related material on a personal blog, website or any similar Internet site. Students or staff

members who blog through the college website must lodge access details with the ICT manager so that incoming comments can be carefully monitored.

It should be noted that all the above matters are dealt with in detail in the college Internet Policy that is available from the college website or, on request, from the college office.

9. Staff Development

The principal and his senior colleagues will ensure that all staff members are properly acquainted with this policy document and that they are up-dated in relation to child protection matters as advised by the Department of Education and the SEELB. The principal, the designated staff members, the child protection administrator and, where appropriate, other members of staff with particular pastoral responsibilities, will attend external training courses relevant to child protection, as appropriate.

10. The Selection and Use of Volunteers

Volunteers are those people who either assume unpaid duties in the college for whatever duration or are engaged by the college to accompany or assist on college visits or trips; summer activity schemes; residential; or to undertake coaching activities in sports activities. They will be recruited, selected and background checked by the college according to the procedures provided by the Department of Education.

Formal arrangements for selecting and vetting are not required for volunteers who are in the college outside college hours and who do not have unsupervised contact with students. These include:

- parents and others undertaking self-help projects for the college;
- parents involved in fund-raising activities and using the college premises for meetings; and
- parents supervising at college functions where members of the college staff are present.

11. Persons with Substantial Access to the College Students

The principal will ensure that the procedures detailed by the Department of Education with regard to the employment of temporary staff or staff employed by private contractors, are followed rigorously.

12. Partnership with Parents/Guardians and Links with External Support Agencies

The college has worked hard to create effective partnerships with the parents/guardians of its students and it has established good working relationships with a range of external support agencies including the Education Welfare Service, the SEELB's Psychological Service and the local PSNI officers. When incidents of child abuse arise, the relevant parents will be informed and involved at the appropriate times and the college will make effective use of the experience and expertise of the appropriate external support agency personnel.

13. Board of Governors

The following are the child protection measures taken by the Board of Governors:

- a. all governors appointed to the Board of Governors must be police checked and approved prior to taking up their position on the board;

- b. all selection & recruitment panels must have at least one governor who is trained in child protection matters in relation to the appointment of staff;
- c. all governors are encouraged to undertake child protection training;
- d. when appointing staff, governors require:
 - photographic ID
 - proof of qualification
 - the specific child protection question will be asked of all candidates during interview
 - the appointee is police checked according to the Department of Education procedures prior to their taking up their position
- e substitute teachers are only employed from the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register;
- f governors issue a letter in relation to student safety as required by the Department of Education;
- g an accessible leaflet relating to child protection is issued to the parents of all year 8 students in September of each year.

14. Child Protection Concerns

Parents wishing to raise a concern to the college in relation to a child protection matter should contact the principal or the designated staff member.

15. Complaints Procedure

Parent/guardians wishing to make a formal complaint in relation to how a child protection matter has been dealt with by the college should follow the college complaints procedure which is available on the college website or by requesting a copy from the college office.

16. Educational Visits

All educational visits, including residential activities, made by students will be organised and undertaken in accordance with the advice issued by the Department of Education and the Education and Library Boards. Such advice includes matters relating to child protection in the context of educational visits. A risk assessment is done for each college residential and educational outing / visit.

17. Conclusion

Members of staff will take all possible measures to ensure that this policy is implemented and that the students are protected and as free from harm as possible, in all the learning and social contexts inside and outside the college where they engage with students.

The Board of Governors agrees with, and fully supports the contents and implementation of this policy.

APPENDIX 1: Child Protection Statement for Contractors

Shimna Integrated College is a community of students, staff, parents/guardians and governors. The prime purpose of the college is to provide an integrated, excellent education for the students and a positive working environment and to ensure the personal safety of all members of the community. We welcome all those who come into the college to work, and for the protection of the students, staff and visiting contractors themselves, we would draw to your attention our Child Protection Policy, and ask that you abide by its requirements.

Should you or any member of your staff feel that you wish to raise a concern about your own treatment during your work in the college, or any incident you have observed, please do not hesitate to raise your concern with the principal, Kevin Lambe, or with the designated staff member, Danella Goodman.

Everyone who works in a school **must** be police vetted.

APPENDIX 2: Code of Conduct for Staff Members

1. Private Meetings with Students

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual students. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- Where possible another student or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

2. Physical Contact with Students [Staff should take account of the college policy on the use of reasonable force.]

- As a general principle, staff should not make unnecessary physical contact with their students.
- Staff, however, should not feel inhibited from providing a distressed student, especially a younger one, who in an emergency or traumatic situation may need reassurance involving appropriate physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide.
- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Staff who have to administer first aid to a student should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other students or another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*
- Any physical contact that would be likely to be misinterpreted by the student, parent or other casual observer, should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the designated staff member.
- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising students in a residential setting, or in approved out of school sports and other activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to students in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

3. Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature, teachers should be aware of the danger that their application, either by students or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised.
- If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the principal before using it.
- Films or videos shown to students should be age appropriate. They should not contain inappropriate language, or inappropriate sexual or violent scenes.

4. Relationships and Attitudes

Staff should ensure that their relationships with students are appropriate to the age, maturity and gender of the students, taking care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Members of staff should not share inappropriate jokes with students. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

APPENDIX 3: Age of Consent

The following is the legal position in relation to adults engaging in sexual activity with children and young people:

- A child below the age of 13 years does not, under any circumstances, have the legal capacity to consent to any form of sexual activity.
- The age at which a young person is legally considered competent to give consent to sexual activity is 16 years.
- Sexual activity with a young person under the age of 16 years is illegal.
- The term “sexual activity” includes ALL sexual activity, not just sexual intercourse.
- Sexual activity involving a child between 13 and 16 years of age is illegal, even where ostensibly consenting.
- It is an offence for an adult to have any sexual activity with a young person below 18 years of age, if the adult is in a position of trust with that young person, for example, in a school, youth club or residential setting.
- ALL sexual activity involving a child of 12 years and under is sexual abuse and **MUST BE REPORTED** at the earliest to our designated staff member who will report it to the PSNI or Social Services.
- Information that indicates that a child of 13 – 15 years of age is engaged in sexual activity **MUST** be treated seriously and reported to our designated staff member at the earliest opportunity.
- Although sexual activity by young people aged 16-17 years is not an offence, those under 18 years of age are entitled to protection. Thus, it is important to ensure in such cases that there are no concerns about sexual abuse, exploitation or abuse of trust to be addressed.

CHILD PROTECTION: WORKING COOPERATIVELY WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

1. Now that we have moved into an era of working in close cooperation with other educational institutions through, for example, the SEP, we need to be clear as to what the position is in relation to child protection matters when members of our staff are working off-site and jointly with staff members from partner schools / colleges. Consequently, the Board of Governors of Shimna Integrated College (SIC) require members of the college staff engaged in off-site learning experiences in cooperation with other learning institutions, to ensure that:

- they exercise a duty to care for all the students in their care, whether or not they are students of SIC;
- they take all measures necessary, in partnership with staff members from partner institutions, to ensure the safety and well-being of all the students in their care, whether or not they are students of SIC;
- they adhere to SIC's child protection policy and practices, as appropriate;
- they confirm at the outset of any partnership activities that the staff members from the partner institution will be operating according to that institution's child protection policy;
- they undertake a risk assessment for each activity and complete the appropriate notification and risk assessment documentation, as required by SIC.
- all adults from partner institutions working with staff and students from SIC have been properly vetted and are able to take full responsibility for their charges;
- the following recommended and pre-approved teacher/student ratios for off-site activities are applied. If, in some particular circumstance, these ratios cannot be met, this should be noted on the risk assessment form and, in consultation with the principal of SIC, due consideration should be given as to whether the planned activity should go ahead:

- **Indoor Activities**

8 yrs+: two adults for up to 20 pupils + one adult for every additional 10 pupils, or part thereof;

- **Outdoor Activities**

8-13 years: two adults for groups of up to 15 pupils + one additional adult per 8 (or part thereof) extra pupils;

13 years+: two adults for groups of up to 20 pupils+ one additional adult per extra 10, or part thereof, pupils.

- the Event Organiser (the SIC staff member with overall responsibility for the activity) and Group leader/s from partner institutions is/are clearly identified and known to all participants;
- the Event Organiser and Group Leader/s know and undertake their responsibilities in accordance with their respective child protection policies; ensure that members of staff from the partner institution/s are properly qualified to instruct or lead in outdoor activities that carry any level of risk to the participating students;

- the necessary approval for students from SIC to participate in such off-site learning and partnership activities (and any necessary medical details) is procured in advance from the parents/guardian of all participating students; and
- they keep parents/guardians informed about the content of all such programmes and to inform them about any accidents that involve their child.

We need to be clear as to what the position is in relation to child protection matters when members of our staff are working off-site and jointly with staff members from partner schools/colleges in the course of their employment.

2. Although it is preferable for a teacher from a partnership institution to accompany and be responsible for the care and safety of their own pupils, the governors recognise that, in some circumstances (eg small primary school) this might not always be possible. In such circumstances, and with the prior consent of the principal of SIC and the Partnership Institution/s, the governors approve the teacher from SIC acting as group leader, subject to the other requirements being met under this Policy. The teacher must, therefore, act in accordance with the requirements of this policy and exercise a duty of care for all students, whether they be from SIC or from a partnership institution.

3. Where the organising staff member from SIC is unhappy about a child-protection related manner when involved in partnership activities, they should report such concerns to the principal of SIC immediately. We should not enter into partnership arrangements until all matters pertaining to child protection procedures and practice have, at least, been agreed in principle.