



GREENGABLES PRE-SCHOOL

CHILD & ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

“The welfare of the child is paramount” – The Children (NI) Order 1995.

It is the policy of Greengables Pre-school to safeguard the welfare of all the children by protecting them from all forms of maltreatment, physical, mental, sexual abuse & exploitation. We will comply with Health & Social Services guidelines on Child Protection and will appoint a Designated Officer (**Tracey Stewart**) and Deputy Designated Officer, (**Amanda Stevenson**) to deal with child protection issues in the setting. The Chairperson, **Nicola Lowry** is the DCPO committee member.

STEPS TAKEN REGARDING THE EMPLOYMENT OF STAFF –

1. Pre-employment interviews will be held and before commencement each potential member of staff will be asked to complete an enhanced background check and a health check signed by their doctor. Further background checks will be carried out by the Health & Social Care Trust. The potential employee will also provide the names of two referees who will be contacted prior to engagement.
2. Any volunteers or students will have completed an enhanced background check before commencement. **‘Supervised’ Volunteers or those within regulated activity in relation to the children (once a week/more often or three or more days within a thirty-day period) will require an enhanced disclosure as per SFGO legislative change from Sept 2026.**
3. All appointments, paid or unpaid will be subject to a probationary period and will not be confirmed unless the pre-school is confident that the applicants can safely be entrusted with the children and that their approach to the workplace is satisfactory.
4. All appointments will be subject to satisfactory vetting procedures before commencement.

PREVENTING ABUSE BY MEANS OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Staff and volunteers receive clear instructions on tasks and limits that apply to them as newcomers during the induction process.
2. All staff/volunteers attend training and regular updates on the Trust procedures –
 - (a) How to recognise signs of abuse (see definitions)
 - (b) What action to take
 - (c) How to protect child & self
3. Maintain appropriate adult/child ratios.
4. The layout of the room ensures constant supervision.
5. The pre-school will provide appropriate activities to encourage children’s self-esteem with regard to self-protection.

DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

Child Abuse:

Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling, other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger, who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both. This abuse may take a number of forms, including: neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

Physical abuse:

Physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented e.g. bruises, particularly bruises of a regular shape which may indicate the use of an implement.

Sexual abuse:

The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend, and to which they are unable to give informed consent; or they violate the social taboos of family roles e.g. may exhibit physical signs or lead to substantial behavioural change, including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Neglect:

The persistent or severe neglect of a child which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive e.g. inadequate clothing, poor growth or hunger.

Emotional abuse:

This is the severe adverse effect on the behavioural and emotional development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment: this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse e.g. excessive dependence or attention seeking.

Exploitation:

This is the intentional ill-treatment of, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking.

Bullying:

This is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in the pre-school. Any complaint by a parent/carer that their child is being bullied will be fully investigated by the leader/designated person. The investigation will be carried out with the knowledge that very young children (age 3 & 4) are still developing social skills and are still learning appropriate ways to interact with others while still addressing their own needs and emotions.

Domestic and sexual violence and abuse:

The Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence & Abuse in Northern Ireland Seven Year Strategy (2016) defines domestic & sexual violence and abuse as follows:

Domestic violence & abuse:

“Threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) incited 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”.

Updated legislation from 2026 also states:

Ill treatment of another or abusive behaviour directed at another by means that a child could be harmed by virtue of witnessing the ill-treatment or domestic abuse of another person. However, it is not necessary for the child to have witnessed such treatment or behaviour or indeed, to have been present when it happened. Abusive behaviour is behaviour which falls within section 2 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI)2021.

Sexual violence & abuse:

“Any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitive, harmful or unwanted that is incited on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability)”.

Types of domestic abuse:

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. It can seriously harm children and young people and witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse. It's important to remember domestic abuse:

- Can happen inside or outside the home
- Can happen over the phone, on the internet and on social networking sites
- Can happen in any relationship and can continue even after the relationship has ended
- Both men & women can be abused or abusers

Female genital mutilation (FGM):

FGM is a child protection issue and is illegal in each of the jurisdictions in the United Kingdom for a child up to 18 years of age.

RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

This will be done as follows:

1. Each member of staff, students or volunteers must inform the pre-school leader/designated person if they have any suspicion, no matter how slight, that a child is being abused, either at home or in pre-school.
2. The pre-school leader/designated officer must ensure a detailed record is kept (in an incident book), of any signs or symptoms observed by asking the reporting member of staff to write a detailed and factual observation of what she/he has seen or heard. This must be dated and signed and a note of any action taken. It will be kept by the leader/designated person in a secure place.
3. If there is a concern about bad practice within the pre-school setting by a member of staff, the member of staff will be suspended on full pay pending the outcome of the social services investigation.
4. **Single Point of Entry team (SPOE) 03001234333** will be informed by the pre-school leader/designated person if there is a concern of child abuse. Records will be shared with the appropriate bodies if the pre-school feels that adequate explanations for changes in a child's condition have not been provided. Advice will be given to pre-school staff about what action will be taken. This will include what discussion, if any, should take place with parents. All discussion of this nature should be recorded, dated and kept in a secure place. **The pre-school's social worker can be contacted at the South Eastern Early Years Team, within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust 02893315112. This may be done anonymously.**
5. The Chairperson of the committee will be informed of the action which has taken place. The child should not be named so that confidentiality is maintained.
6. The parents will be informed when a case is referred to social services. This will be handled in conjunction with advice from social services.
7. With the understanding that the welfare of the child is paramount, the pre-school will endeavour to support the child's family during a child protection investigation.
8. The pre-school will work towards building trusting relationships with families involved.
9. The pre-school leader/designated person will attend a case conference if asked to do so.
10. The child will continue to attend pre-school during a child protection investigation.

RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO A CHILD'S DISCLOSURE

1. Listen carefully to what the child is saying.
2. Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you.
3. Tell them it's not their fault.
4. Say you'll take them seriously.
5. Do not confront the alleged abuser.
6. Explain what you will do next.
7. **Record & report what the child has told you as soon as possible to Single Point of Entry team (SPOE) 03001234333.**

COLLECTION OF CHILDREN (Section 4 risk assessment – drop off & pick up)

1. Children may only be collected from pre-school by someone over the age of eighteen (unless a parent).
2. The person collecting the child must be known to pre-school staff.
3. If someone unknown to the group is to collect a child the staff must be informed during the morning either verbally by phone or by completing a "collection of child" form.
4. If someone unknown to staff tries to collect a child, the child will not be released until a parent/carer has been contacted by telephone.
5. A child will not be released to anyone (including a parent) if he or she is very obviously under the influence of alcohol or drugs and staff feel the person may not be able to care for the child appropriately.

ADULT PROTECTION

1. **The adult/child ratio is 1:8 (children over 3 years) 1:4 (children 2 years 10 months).**
2. An adult will not be left on her/his own in the playroom with the children (unless in an emergency or if other staff members are close by e.g. in corridor play area).
3. One adult may accompany a small group of children to the toilet (no more than 8 children).
4. An adult will always alert another adult when leaving the classroom making them aware that the adult/child ratio has changed.
5. Parents sign a permission slip to allow staff to change a child's clothing and help with any toileting issues (e.g. needing help to pull down pants, cleaning after using the toilet if required).
6. If possible, children will be changed in a private area of the classroom when other adults are present but at times a child may need changed in the toilet area when only one adult can be present. Staff will inform other staff members when this is happening.

7. If a staff member is alone in the classroom with a child (e.g. changing a child while the rest of the class is outdoors or in assembly hall), the classroom door will be kept ajar.

This policy was adopted by Greengables Pre-school on 9/4/24,

Updated: September 2024 to include new staff members & Temporary DPO

Update: January 2025, Amended telephone numbers & reference to South eastern early years teams replacing home first reference

Update: January 2026, amended to include Amanda Stevenson as DCPO2 & Nicola Lowry as DCPO on Committee

Update: September 2026 to include the following statements;

Domestic Violence section: **Ill treatment of another....**

Steps taken regarding employment of staff: **'Supervised' Volunteers or those within regulated activity in relation to the children... require an enhanced disclosure as per SFGO legislative change from Sept 2026**

Reviewed September 2026

Witnessed by

Chairperson, Nicola Lowry:

Leader, Tracey Stewart: