To: Principals  
Designated Teachers for Child Protection  
All schools

May 2011

Dear Colleague

CHILD PROTECTION: CONTACT WITH SCHOOLS DURING SUMMER HOLIDAYS

This letter sets out the arrangements which the Department is putting in place for dealing with child protection referrals made to social services during the summer holidays which require information held by schools.

Why is action necessary?

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), the body tasked inspecting provision across the health and social care sectors, recently reviewed the handling of a number of child protection referrals. As a result of this work, the RQIA has recommended that formal arrangements are put in place for the education sector to contribute to the initial assessment process when a referral is made during the summer holidays.

In the normal course of events, a member of the local Gateway Team makes contact with a school’s Principal or Designated Teacher for child protection and seeks information about a pupil. Clearly, during the summer holidays when the school is closed, telephone contact cannot be made and written requests may have to wait up to 6/7 weeks for attention.

Social services colleagues consider the information which education/school can provide about a pupil to be critical to the initial assessment and for this reason the Department has accepted the recommendation to put formal arrangements in place.

What are the arrangements?

Local Gateway Teams will be advised that if a child protection referral is made during the summer holidays and information is required about a child /young person attending school then the following procedure should be followed:

- A Team member should contact the school by telephone to confirm that it is closed or if open whether the Principal or Designated Teacher for Child Protection can be contacted.

- If the Principal or Designated Teacher can be contacted then this should be done by telephone and followed up in writing.

- If the school is closed and no contact can be made with the Principal or Designated Teacher then contact should be made with a Designated Officer.
from the relevant Board’s Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS).

- The Designated Officer will then co-ordinate the preparation of available education information as input to the Gateway Team’s initial assessment of the child protection referral and how the child’s support needs should be met.

If you have any questions about this letter you can make contact with your local CPSSS.

Yours faithfully

MARY POTTER
Pupil Support Unit

REF: CHILD PROTECTION: SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROCEDURES