

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál

Child Protection Policy

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1. Introductory Statement

The staff of Clondulane N.S. have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:

Prevention – curricular provision

Procedures – procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures

Practice – best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and a copy of the Department of Education and Science “*Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures*” will be made available to all staff.

It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with “*Children First*” and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment.
- Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school.
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community.
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff.
- Ensure that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the “Children First” and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse.
- Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff.

3. Definition

Child Abuse can be categorised into four different types; neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. (Child Protection Guidelines p.31)

- Neglect can be defined in terms of omission where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.
- Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child’s need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met.
- Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.
- Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

4. Prevention

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the schools' Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

On enrolment of their child parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school and a copy of the "Stay Safe: A Parent's Guide" provided.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

Other Considerations – See PREVENTION, page 8

5. Practice

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking, etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in "*Children First*" and the Department of Education and Science document, "*Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures*".

Responsibilities of School Management

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to do the following;

- Have clear procedures which the teachers and other school staff must follow where they suspect, or are alerted to, possible child abuse, including where a child discloses abuse.
- Designate a senior member of staff to have specific responsibility for child protection. In the case of primary schools, the designated liaison person for dealing with outside agencies should be the Principal or other person ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed so that suspected cases of child abuse are referred promptly to the local health board or An Garda Síochána.

- Monitor the progress of children considered to be at risk.
- Contribute to the prevention of child abuse through curricular provision
- Promote in-service training for teachers to ensure that they have a good working knowledge of child protection issues and procedures.
- Have clear written procedures in place concerning action to be taken where allegations are received against school employees.

The Board of Management of this school has appointed Liz O'Brien as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), and Lisa Daly as the deputy DLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed that:

- All concerns/disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate)
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.

6.Procedures

Disclosures

If a child discloses to a teacher or to other school staff alleging that s/he is being harmed by a parent/care-giver or any other person, the person who receives the information should;

- Listen carefully and supportively
- Obtain only necessary relevant facts
- Never promise confidentiality to a person making a disclosure
- Explain the requirement to report to the Health Board in a supportive manner
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record
- Inform the designated liaison person (DLP) or in his/her absence the deputy DLP

The child should not be interviewed formally.

The DLP should report the matter to the Health Board immediately. The DLP should ask for the Duty Social Worker. In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of health board staff, the report should be made to An Garda Síochána. (see Child Protection Guidelines)

Concerns

In cases where the school personnel have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the appropriate health board, they should seek appropriate advice. To do so the DLP should consult the appropriate health board staff without having to give identifying details. If a health board advises that a referral should be made, the DLP should act on that advice. When such a report is being made to the Health Board the Chairman of the Board of Management should be informed.

Allegations or suspicions of abuse by school employees

Legal advice should be sought. Two procedures must be followed.

- Reporting procedure in respect of the allegation
- Procedure for dealing with the employee.

The DLP is responsible for reporting the matter to the Health Board while the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume the responsibility for addressing the employment issues.

However where the allegation of abuse is against the DLP, the Chairman of the Board of Management will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

The primary aim of Boards of Management is to protect the children within the school to whom they have a duty of care. However, school employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and the employee fairly treated. This includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. (See Reporting Procedure, Child Protection Guidelines p.15)

Bullying

Bullying is not tolerated in this school and the school's Anti-Bullying Policy addresses the school's policy in this area.

7. Links to other policy/planning areas

- SPHE curriculum – Strand Unit on “Safety and Protection”
- Staysafe Programme
- The School Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Statement
- Information and Communication Technology
- Special Needs
- Swimming Policy
- School Tours/Outings
- Children First Guidelines
- Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures

8. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises. The board of management will ensure that adequate training/information and support is provided for all staff, parents and board of management members.