

Child Protection Policy

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

The staff, parents and management of St. Malachy's Boys' National School have developed and agreed this policy in line with current recommendations, child protection guidelines and DES Circulars relating to child abuse prevention.

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

- 1) Prevention- curriculum provision
- 2) Procedures - for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- 3) Practice- best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document will be given to all staff and a copy of Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures 2011 will be available to all and is accessible to all interested parties on Dept of Ed and Skills website.

This document is formulated in response to recent changes in Guidance and Procedures in relation to Child Protection matters and takes account of the provisions of each of the following important pieces of legislation:

- Freedom of Information Act 1997
- The Education Act 1998
- The Child Welfare Act 2000.
- Children First (Dept of Children and Youth Affairs) – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011

These procedures are based on

Children First-National guidelines for the protection and welfare of Children 2011

References

- Children First
- Child Protection procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Dept of Ed and Skills)

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in each school policy, school practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the BoM of St. Malachy's BNS has approved this Child Protection Policy.

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 act in accordance with the 'Children First' 2011 and the 2011 DES Guidelines and Procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse.
- Provide for ongoing training in child protection and related areas for all school staff

1) 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 school's SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection (Personal Safety).

On enrolment of their child parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school. The formal lessons of the programme will be taught every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan. Mrs Orla Hughes has agreed to take responsibility for this aspect of curriculum delivery. Staff are provided with necessary SPHE materials and are regularly updated .

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible. Particular attention is given to pupils with special needs whose increased vulnerability is generally accepted. Their need for an adapted programme is recognized by staff as is their need for increased vigilance in the area of bullying. A School policy on Bullying was agreed ratified and implemented by all school partners as of April 2014.

2) Procedures

All staff (teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff, secretary, caretaker) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First' available in school and the Department of Education and Science document, Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedure 2011

The Board of Management of this school has appointed Mr. Kevin Stanley, Principal, as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Mrs. Orla Hughes, Deputy Principal as the deputy DLP. The role of the DLP is set out at (DES Procedures 3.2).

3) Practice

School staff and board of management have identified and agreed the following practices to be adopted in the school.

a) Physical Contact:

In general there is no need for physical contact between school staff and pupils. Where such contact is necessary e.g. in the case of accidents in the playground, it is prudent to have a second adult or a child witness present.

b) Visitors / Guest Speakers:

Where visitors or guest speakers are in the school, it is imperative that a teacher is present throughout.

c) Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs:

The parents are consulted and protocol/practices agreed and set out briefly in written form and are included in IEP. The specific role and duties of the SNA are defined and agreed with the parents.

d) Toileting accidents:

The child is withdrawn from the classroom; his privacy is respected and embarrassment minimized. The least intrusion coupled with immediate maximum support and absolute respect for the child's wishes are the guiding principles here. The parents are contacted and their wishes ascertained and followed. Arrangements are put in place to enable the child speak privately by phone with the parent.

e) One to One teaching:

Is not encouraged and should only be undertaken in certain circumstances and only where absolutely necessary. Teachers should be conscious of the obligation to respect the child's personal space. Where at all feasible the teacher sits across the table from the child. Room doors and blinds should be kept open wherever possible and doors must always be unlocked when occupied. Such arrangements must first be approved by Parent and Principal. Doors have been upgraded to include a glass viewing panel. Children should not be interviewed in private by a member of staff on their own, another adult or other pupils should be present.

Changing for Games/PE/Swimming:

f) The teacher remains outside the changing room but sufficiently proximate to ensure child safety and proper behaviour. Children who need help with changing are identified and a buddy system may be put in place for them. Swimming classes require children to dress in open dressing room. Teachers of younger classes will need to enter in order to maintain safety and control. On all occasions teachers should maintain a presence directly at the entrance and should only enter in pairs. If assistance is sought by a child another adult must be present.

g) School Tours/Visits

Parents are consulted well in advance of any proposed tour or visit to places or events of educational/cultural interest. Travel is mainly by coach but may be by foot on visits to the Town Hall,

Museum and County Library. Parents are often available to augment the number of adults accompanying the children and their support is highly valued by the school. Where tours exceed the length of the school day, the proposed return time is posted in advance and arrangements put in place for the safe return to their homes of every pupil. On all school outings the itinerary is assessed beforehand, the level and quantity of supervision is determined to ensure the optimum safety of the entire tour party.

h) Recruitment and selection of staff:

References are sought for all appointments to the staff. Those who have provided the references are contacted in each individual case. Staff are subject to the Garda Vetting Procedure and the school must seek and receive clearance from the Vetting Unit before any appointment can take place.

i) General conduct

The school's Code of Behaviour 2010 document is currently in use and was updated in accordance with Anti bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools in 2013. The Code will be continuously updated in accordance with evolving legislation. All allegations are dealt with in accordance with (DES Procedures 6)

j) Supervision of pupils:

Morning break and Lunch break: The roster for morning and lunch break is posted daily on the notice-board outside the Principal's Office.

Pupils entering and leaving the school: The duties, responsibilities and supervisory roles of specific staff members are assigned at the commencement of each academic year.

Movement of pupils is monitored as they exit the school grounds each evening.

k) Internet use:

A separate policy on internet use has been drawn up.

l) Photos, Identifying pupils:

Parental permission is required for the taking of individual photographs; similarly, where photographs are supplied to the media. Whether pupils are to be identified is ascertained through consultation with the parents concerned whose expressed wishes must be strictly complied with.

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to the principal and parents.

Identification of Child Abuse (DES Procedures 2 and Children First APPENDIX 1)

There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse. These are:

- (i) considering the possibility
- (ii) looking out for signs of abuse
- (iii) recording of information.

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural, or developmental.

They can exist in the relationships between children and parents/ carers or between children and other family members. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse.

Some signs (APPENDIX 3 DES Procedures) are more indicative of abuse than others. These include:

- (i) disclosure of abuse and neglect by a child or young person;
- (ii) age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge;
- (iii) specific injuries or patterns of injuries;
- (iv) absconding from home or a care situation;
- (v) attempted suicide;
- (vi) under-age pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease;
- (vii) signs in one or more categories at the same time. For example, signs of developmental delay, physical injury and behavioural signs may together indicate a pattern of abuse.

If abuse is suspected, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible a standard report form is available in (APPENDIX 4 DES Procedures).

Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information which may be relevant.

The severity of a sign does not necessarily equate with the severity of the abuse.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- (i) specific indication from the child that (s)he was abused;
- (ii) an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- (iii) evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
- (iv) an injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour;
- (v) consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

School personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse should act as follows and in accordance with (DES Procedures 4.1).

- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions nor make suggestions to the child
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events
- Do not over react
- Explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately as soon as possible and retain the record

This information should then be reported to the Designated Liaison Person

Reporting of concerns

Action to be taken by school personnel

If a school employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused the school employee should, in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times should be borne in mind. A written record will be kept. If the school employee and the Designated Liaison Person are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the Designated Liaison Person should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately..(DES Procedures 4). Where school personnel have concerns but are not sure whether to report, the DLP should consult the HSE in Dundalk (4.2.1of DES Procedures). Allegations against School personnel are dealt with in accordance with (DES Procedures 5)

Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

The purpose of this Act is to provide protection from penalisation by their employers of persons who report child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of health boards or any member of the Garda Síochána. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including, dismissal. The avenue of redress for such a person is by way of complaint to a Rights Commissioner. There is also provision for an appeal from the Rights Commissioner by either party to the Employment Appeals Tribunal. The Act creates a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities "knowing that statement to be false". This is designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Qualified Privilege

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have ‘qualified privilege’ under common law. Reports made to Health Boards may be subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997. This act enables members of the public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence (DES Procedures 1:11)

Policy Document

This policy document has been taken directly from “Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2011 and the following section will be on display in all classrooms and at strategic points throughout our school.

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirement of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and post Primary School, the Board of Management of St Malachy's BNS has agreed the following child protection policy:

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr. Kevin Stanley
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Mrs. Orla Hughes.
4. In its policies, practices and activities, St. Malachy's BNS will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:
The school will
 - Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
 - Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters
 - Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
 - Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children; and
 - Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

5. Listed are those School policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to child protection in our school.

The Code of Behaviour/Anti-bullying Policy,
Racism policy
Health and Safety
Critical Incident
ICT
Enrolment Policy
Supervision of Pupils..
Lunchtime Break-time Supervision
Sporting Activities/School Outings
Pupil Work
Garda Vetting

6. This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

7. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.