

Presentation Primary, Clonmel

Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement

The policy was reviewed in February 2016 by the Board of Management, staff, and the Parents' Council.

Rationale

The school has adopted the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and Procedures for Primary Schools (2011) in relation to child protection and welfare. This policy is an outline of how the school proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all children attending the school.

Legal Framework

- Children First (National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011, Department of Health and Children)
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Education and Science, 2011)
- Circular 0065/2011 Child Protection Procedures
- Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 1997.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Presentation schools promote the development of a community of faith inspired by Gospel values. The dignity of each student, staff member and parent/guardian is honoured and reflected in the school policies, structures and in the mission statement:

The Presentation Primary School, Clonmel is a Catholic school. It is a community of pupils, parents, staff and board members in which each individual is valued and respected. Inspired by the vision of Nano Nagle, we aim to:

- Foster a sense of belonging in a sharing friendly atmosphere by building self-esteem, through supporting and encouraging one another
- Understand and value everyone's individual needs
- Develop each person's skills, talents and creativity to the full, in a caring, safe and happy environment.

Aims

- To raise awareness of child abuse, namely, emotional, physical, sexual and neglect among all school staff as well as all the education partners in the school
- To put in place clear procedures for all school personnel dealing with suspicions and allegations of child abuse
- To identify other policy areas which need to be amended in light of the Child Protection Guidelines (2011)
- To support students to develop the skills that contribute to the prevention of child abuse and that enable children to deal with abuse if it occurs.
- To raise awareness of child abuse (emotional, physical, sexual and neglect) among all school staff as well as all the education partners in the school
- To put in place clear procedures for all school personnel dealing with suspicions and/or allegations of child abuse
- To identify other policy areas which need to be amended in light of the Child Protection Guidelines (2011)
- To support students to develop the skills that contribute to the prevention of child abuse and that enable children to deal with abuse if it occurs.

GUIDELINES

THESE GUIDELINES ARE LAID OUT AS FOLLOWS:

- 1.0 Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
- 2.0 Roles, responsibilities and guidelines
- 2.2 Role of the board of management
- 2.2 Role of the staff members (teachers, assistants, secretary and care taking staff)
- 2.3 Role of the DLP
- 3.0 Child protection meetings (Case conferences)
- 4.0 Organisation and curriculum implications

1.0 Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

- The board of management has appointed the principal, *Mairéad Conway*, as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) to have specific responsibility for child protection.
- The deputy principal, Noelle Lambert, has been appointed as Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP if she is unavailable for whatever reason.
- The position of DLP will be addressed at the first meeting of each new board of management. The DLP will continue to act in this capacity until such time as she is replaced by the board for whatever reason.

2.0 Roles and responsibilities

- The board of management has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of the pupils in the school.
- The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection in the school.
- All staff have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.

Reasonable grounds for concern

The 2011 guidelines give the following examples as constituting grounds for concern:

- Specific indication from the child that was abused.
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence, such as an injury, or behaviour that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.
- An injury or behaviour that 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.
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional and/or physical neglect.

2.1 Role of the board of management

- To arrange for the planning, development and implementation of an effective child protection programme
- To monitor and evaluate its effectiveness
- To provide appropriate staff development and training.

Specifically the board will:

- Appoint a DLP and deputy DLP
- Have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse
- Monitor the progress of children at risk
- Ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse

- Investigate and respond to allegations of child abuse against one of the school's employees that have been reported to the HSE or Gardaí
- Decide on school staff attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and advise staff before attending such meetings/conferences.
- Undertake an annual review of the child protection policy

Procedures for the board of management in cases of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by a school employee.

A. Reporting

In the event of receiving a complaint or suspicion about an employee:

- The DLP will immediately inform the chairperson.
- She will seek a written statement of the allegation from the person/agency making the allegation. Parents/guardians may make a statement on behalf of a child.
- The DLP will seek advice from the HSE and will take responsibility for reporting, based on this advice.
- If the DLP, following consultation with the HSE, decides that this matter is not for reporting, she will inform the chairperson. They will then inform, in writing, the person or agency making the allegation of the reasons for this decision. If this person or agency still has concerns, they are free to consult with or report to the HSE or Gardaí on an individual basis. The provisions of the Protection for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply, once they report reasonably and in good faith.
- If the DLP, following consultation with the HSE, decides that this matter is for reporting, she will inform the chairperson, who will proceed in accordance with the procedures in the guidelines (2011, p.14).
- The DLP/Deputy DLP will complete a standard reporting form as comprehensively as is possible. When the chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse, she will inform the trustees of the Presentation Sisters, normally through the Presentation Education Office. The chairperson will always seek legal advice and base her response on this advice.
- In general, the same person will not have responsibility for dealing with the appropriate authorities (HSE/ Gardaí) and with the employee issues.
- Where an allegation of abuse is against the DLP, the chairperson will assume responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE.
- The chairperson will privately inform the employee of the fact and nature of the allegation, and whether or not it has been reported by the DLP to the HSE (see 4.2 – 4.3, p.16 DES 2011). The chairperson has a duty to afford the employee fairness and due process. The employee is entitled to details and a copy of the written allegation, to advice, representation and an opportunity to respond to the board within a week. The employee may be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the board of management within a specified period of time. The employee will be told that this may be passed on to the HSE, Gardaí and the board's legal advisers.
- The school employee may need support pending investigation and resolution of the matter. External services will be made available to the employee for this purpose.

B. Responding

- When the chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse, s/he will always seek legal advice and base her response on this advice.
- The chairperson will consider whether there is any risk to pupils' safety. The first priority should be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. The chairperson of the board will, as a matter of urgency, take any necessary protective measures. These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee, financially or otherwise, unless where necessary, to protect children. If the chairperson considers that there is a risk, she may require the employee to take immediate administrative leave. If unsure, the chairperson will consult with the HSE Childcare Manager/Gardaí.

- In relation to the above, any absence by a school employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not as a suspension. Such leave of absence would not imply any degree of guilt on the part of the school employee. Where such a leave of absence is invoked:
 - The trustees will be informed immediately
 - The student concerned and his/her parent/guardian will normally be informed, confidentially, regarding the leave of absence of the employee
 - The DES will be contacted with regard to (a) formal approval for paid leave of absence of the school employee (b) departmental sanction for the employment of a substitute, as appropriate.
- Once it is deemed necessary by the DLP and chairperson to make a report (after receiving advice from the HSE), the chairperson will convene and inform a meeting of the board of management as soon as possible. The chairperson will maintain regular and close liaison with those investigating authorities and a decision on the position of the school employee will be taken, having due regard to the advice given to the board by those authorities.
- Where the alleged abuse has taken place within the school, or relates to the abuse of pupils of the school, by school employees outside of school time, the board will investigate the matter. The board will convene a further meeting once the relevant information has been gathered. At this meeting the board will consider in detail:
 - the allegations made and their source
 - the advice given by relevant authorities
 - the written responses of the employee.
- At this meeting:
 - The person/agency who is alleging abuse by the school employee will be offered an opportunity to present his/her case to the board and may be accompanied by another person.
 - Parents/guardians may act on behalf of child.
 - The employee will also be afforded an opportunity to present their case and may also be accompanied.
- Members of the board will be aware of their responsibilities to maintain strict confidentiality about all matters relating to the issue. The board will adhere to the principles of due process and natural justice.
- At the end of the investigation, a meeting will be arranged to inform the employee of the next steps. The employee may be accompanied or represented by friend or an organisation representative. If the outcome is a disciplinary charge, further action will be in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedures, and will happen on foot of the child protection enquiries. If the employee has been suspended and it is not intended to proceed with any form of disciplinary action, the suspension will be lifted immediately by the appropriate body. The principal will meet the employee to discuss the person's return to work. The DES will be informed of the outcome if the employee has been absent on administrative leave.
- Where it is not possible for the board to conduct an enquiry into allegations (e.g. where abuse has occurred in past employment, or where the employee is undergoing investigation by relevant authorities), the chairperson will act on advice of authorities. The chairperson will maintain close contact with the HSE and receive reports and records from them where appropriate.

2.2 Role of all staff members

It is the responsibility of all staff members to familiarise themselves with the Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) especially:

- Chapter 2 Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse
- Chapter 3 Basis for Reporting & Standard Reporting Procedures
- Appendix 1 Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse
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All staff will also familiarise themselves with the school Child Protection Policy which

has been made available to them.

1. Guidelines for staff members in handling disclosures from children

a. Where a child discloses alleged abuse to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively. Great care must be taken to ensure that the child's trust is not compromised. This should not be a formal interview. The following advice is offered:

- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events
- Do not over-react
- Confidentiality should not be assured - explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately noting
 - What, where and when?
 - Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries
 - Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate
- Retain the record securely

b. The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate allegations of abuse.

c. The DLP should then be informed and given relevant records.

d. If the suspected abuser is the DLP then the suspicion and any records will be passed on to the chairperson who will proceed as per guidelines.

2. Guidelines for teachers and staff members in handling suspicions of abuse

a. Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) especially:

- Chapter 2: Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse
- Chapter 3: Basis for Reporting and Standard Reporting Procedure
- Appendix 1: Signs and Symptoms Of Child Abuse

b. Staff members will observe and record over time the dates/ signs/symptoms/behaviour causing them concern on the school reporting form available from the office.

c. They will inform the DLP and pass on all records.

2.3 Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

- The DLP acts as a liaison with outside agencies, HSE, Gardaí and other parties with child protection concerns
- The DLP will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Children First Guidelines in the school. She will photocopy and circulate to all staff Chapters 2, 3 & Appendix 1 of these guidelines and advise on good practice
- The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. She will keep records of these consultations.
- The DLP will seek advice from the HSE.
- The DLP will report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to the HSE or/and Gardaí based on this advice.
- The DLP will maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.
- The DLP will inform the board of management of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE and those cases where advice was sought by the DLP but no report was made.
- The DLP will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.

Guidelines for the DLP in handling reported concerns and disclosures

- a. Where the DLP/Deputy DLP has concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, they will seek appropriate advice. To do this the DLP/Deputy will make informal contact with the assigned duty social worker. In this instance, the DLP/Deputy DLP will be explicit that she is requesting advice and not making a report. If advised to report the matter, the DLP will act on that advice.
- b. The DLP/Deputy DLP will then make a report to the HSE, by telephone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of HSE staff, the report will be made to the Gardaí. The DLP will also report the matter to the chairperson of the board, who will then follow the procedures as outlined in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3) of Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011).
- c. The standard reporting form will be completed by the DLP/Deputy DLP as comprehensively as possible.
- d. Parents/guardians will normally be informed that a report is being made. It may be decided that informing a parent/guardian is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. In such circumstances, the decision not to inform the parent/guardian will be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- e. When the allegation is against the DLP, the chairperson then assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE and filling in the standard reporting form.
- f. Where there are allegations or suspicions of peer abuse, the DLP will follow the same procedures. It will also be arranged that:
 - Parents/guardians of all parties will be notified and the DLP will inform the chairperson.
 - Principal and class teachers will make arrangements to meet separately with all parents/guardians.
 - The school will make arrangements to minimise the possibility of the abusive behaviour recurring.

Confidentiality

- All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child. The giving of information to those who need to have that information is not a breach of confidentiality.

3.0 Child Protection Meetings (Case conferences)

- A request for a Child Protection meeting is made from the HSE through the D.L.P. who will consult with the chairperson of the board of the school. The chairperson may seek clarification through the D.L.P. as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present.
- The school employee (usually DLP/DDLP) may complete a report for the meeting/conference (see Guidelines 2011).
- The school employee will be advised if children/parents/guardians are going to be present. The school employee may contact the chairperson of the child protection meeting for advice.
- The school employee may keep a child's behaviour under closer observation, if requested to do so. This may include observing the child's behaviour, peer interactions, school progress or informal conversations.
- In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with HSE staff, will be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved. Where appropriate and within the normal limits of confidentiality, reporting staff will be kept informed about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation following on from their report
- School staff attending a child protection meeting/case conference will familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined on pgs. 149 – 155 of Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011).

4.0 Organisation and curriculum implications

Existing school procedures already in place and new procedures being put in place will be examined with reference to the Children First Guidelines and any child protection issues that may arise will be addressed, including:

*Supervision
Accident*

*Bullying
Sports activities*

*Intimate care needs
Critical Incidence*

*Record keeping
Induction of all new staff
Communication*

*Children travelling in teachers' cars
Induction of pupils
Attendance*

*Code of Behaviour
School tours/outings*

Supervision

School supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks and before and after school. Principal/deputy principal and other named staff will be involved before/after school supervision. There are guidelines in place for supervision at break times and there are agreed procedures for teacher absences.

Behaviour

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under the school code of behaviour. Bullying behaviours are addressed in the school anti-bullying policy. If an incident occurs which is considered to be of a sexualised nature, the DLP will be informed.

Visibility

Teachers will ensure that children are visible at all times when they are in the school playground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or sheds where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school or the playground without supervision, and they are not to engage with adults who are outside of the school.

Staff should make every effort not to be alone in a classroom with one child or detain a child on their own after school. In the case of special needs pupils where resource hours and assistance are sanctioned on an individual basis, it is school policy that staff in such a situation should work with the classroom door open, thus rendering the occupants visible at all times.

Windows have been inserted into doors of small Learning Support rooms for Child Protection Purposes.

Visitors

Teachers on playground duty will be alert to visitors entering the school or the school playground and will ascertain their intentions. Visitors will be supervised in the discharge of their business.

Sporting activities

Parents/guardians may assist teaching staff for sporting activities, including swimming. They will always work under the supervision of the teacher/s and will be briefed on school procedures relating to health and safety. Two adults will be in attendance at swimming classes in local pool.

Children with physical disability

Children with physical disabilities who may require assistance in toileting will be aided by a Special Needs Assistant who has met the necessary screening requirements when being employed by the school

Children travelling in teachers' cars

Teachers will be sensitive to health and safety issues if they carry children in their cars. A child will not travel alone in a teacher's car.

Record keeping

In all situations, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded as soon as possible after the report is made, regardless of whether or not a referral is subsequently made to a statutory agency. Any reports/completed forms will be stored in a safe and secure location. It is possible that school personnel may subsequently be invited by the HSE to attend a Child protection meeting. When an individual makes a report to the statutory authorities, the possibility always exists that s/he may be called to give evidence should legal action be taken. It is therefore important to record details of disclosure and any other relevant information that may have been heard and seen. The standard reporting form will be used.

Induction of pupils

All parents/guardians and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents/guardians will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development,

including the Stay Safe, S.P.H.E. and RSE programmes. The school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-bullying policies will be made available to all parents/guardians

Curriculum implications

The personal/social skills and self-esteem of children will be developed through all curricular areas. All teachers will teach the Stay Safe programme annually to help prevent child abuse and to enable children to deal appropriately with abuse if it occurs.

Success criteria

To evaluate the effectiveness of this policy, the following criteria will be used:

- Delivery and participation by all staff in training
- Delivery of the SPHE curriculum
- Delivery and participation by children in the Stay Safe Programme
- Assessment of these procedures by participants following a child protection case
- Feedback from all staff

Timeframe for implementation

These procedures will be implemented following ratification by the BOM.

Timeframe for review

A review will be conducted based on the criteria above, following any and all incidents when the guidelines are used. The policy will be also routinely reviewed annually.

Responsibility for review

- Board of management
- Principal
- All staff

Ratification and communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2012 and has been reviewed annually since that date. Most recent review took place in February 2016. Parents/guardians have been notified that the policy is available and that they are welcome to read and/or comment on the policy.

Signed: Amal Doms (Chairperson, B.O.M.) Date: 24-02-16