

# Child Protection Policy Ballyea N.S. October 2011

October  
2011

S.N. Bhaile Aodha



# *Child Abuse Prevention Programme*

## Child Protection Policy Ballyea N.S

DLP Martin McMahon

Deputy DLP Muireann Mescal

### **Introductory Statement**

The staff, parents and management of **Ballyea 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.

- Circular 65/2011 - 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' (DES)
- 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (Dept of Children and Youth Affairs)
- Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES)

A copy of the school's child protection policy which includes the names of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP has been made available to all school personnel and the Parents' Association and will be readily accessible to parents on request.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the followings areas:-

- a) Prevention – curriculum provision
- b) Procedures - procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- c) Practice - best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and the appended section from the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff, BOM and Parents' Association.

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

### **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
- To put in place for all school personnel clear procedures for dealing with suspicions and allegations of abuse

## **Prevention – Curriculum Provision**

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' **SPHE curriculum** under the strand unit **Safety and Protection**.

The 5 formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

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 RSE Programme is taught as part of the SPHE curriculum under the strand **Myself**, strand units **Growing and changing** and **Taking Care of my body**. The content objectives will be taught every second year by a visiting teacher. Similar to the Stay Safe Programme on enrolment parents are informed to what the programme entails, parents have an opt out clause.

## **Procedures: Dealing with concerns/ disclosures**

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'. (See attached Appendix, pages 5 to 20 from the above DES guidelines)

The Board of Management of this school has appointed **Martin McMahon** as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and **Muireann Mescal** as the deputy DLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- 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.
- Each teacher will be provided with a folder containing a standard recording sheet- these are to be kept in a secure location.
- Only the child's number as per Roll book will be used when recording, not the child's name.

## **Actions to be taken by the DLP**

If a school employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused, he/she should report the matter to the DLP. The need for confidentiality is essential. Therefore the child concerned will be identified on any written reports, only by their number on the school register.

- If the school employee and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or allegation, the DLP should report the matter immediately to the relevant Health Board
- A report should be made in person, by phone or in writing to the social worker on duty. Personal contact with the social worker is preferable, to allow for the transfer of as much information as possible
- In the event of an emergency or the non-availability of Health Board staff, the report should be made to An Garda Síochána

- The report should include as much information as possible on the Standard Reporting form
- The Chairperson of the Board of Management should be informed at this point
- The parents/guardians of the child will be informed also, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. A decision not to inform the parents/guardians should be recorded briefly along with the reason for not doing so
- Where school personnel have concerns about a child, but are unsure whether to report the matter, the DLP shall seek appropriate advice, by consulting with Health Board staff. They shall be explicit that they are not making a report but are requesting advice. It would not be envisaged that the DLP would supply identifying details at this informal stage, as are required when making a report. If a Health Board advises that a referral should be made, then the DLP should act on that advice
- If, following discussions, the DLP decides that the matter should not be formally referred to the Health Board, then he should give a clear statement, in writing to the school employee, as to the reasons why action is not being taken. The school employee should be advised that if he/she remains concerned, about the situation, he/she is free to consult with or report to the Health Board again.
- It is essential that at all time these matters be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among those mentioned above.

The DLP shall also inform the school authority of the number of cases where the DLP submitted a report to the HSE or Gardai or sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each Board of Management meeting, the Principal's report shall include the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the board meeting.

### **Practice:**

The following areas have been considered by the staff and board of management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the staff and board of management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

#### **a) Physical contact**

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult.

While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining it's appropriateness:-

- It is acceptable to the child
- It is open and not secretive
- The age and developmental stage of the child

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

#### **b) Visitors / Guest Speakers:**

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school (principal/teachers) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate.

**c) Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs:**

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting /intimate care a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, principal and if appropriate the pupil . The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs. The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when the particular staff involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.

Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/ toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

**d) Toileting accidents:**

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has an 'accident' of this nature they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change.

If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents/guardians cannot be contacted the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In all such situations two members of staff should be present. *A record of all such incidents will be kept and principal and parents will be notified.*

**e) One- to One teaching**

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment. Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought.

Work being carried out by special needs assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

**f) Changing for Games/ PE/ Swimming**

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/PE/ swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal areas and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/ volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child. At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils.

**g) Recruitment and selection of staff**

The recruitment and selection of staff is crucial to ensuring that those working with the children in the school are safe adults insofar as this can be determined. Correct procedures will be followed in relation to advertising, interviewing and the selection of staff, and other practices will also be considered

- All applications should be asked to supply in writing information which includes appropriate personal details, a resumé of past and current work/volunteering experience, indicating relevant qualification or skills acquired.
- At least two written references-verifications of which shall be sought.
- Garda vetting will be sought also

#### **h) Supervision of Children**

Children are adequately supervised at all times during school hours. It is expected that a child will never be in the school building alone with a teacher. Should any incidents/accidents take place while children are under the supervision of school staff, these will be adequately recorded. First Aid will always be administered in public place, or in the presence of other adults/children. Children will never travel alone in a staff member's car. Children will not be allowed to be collected by someone unknown to the staff. Where schools are aware of a court order being in place which prevents someone from having access to a child, a copy of that order should be requested by the school. In the event of the parents/guardians non compliance with the court order the Gardaí should be summoned to the school to enforce it.

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 principal and parents.

#### **Links to other policy / planning areas:**

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection',  
The School Code of Discipline

Procedures: Anti-Bullying Policy .  
Health and Safety Statement.

Practice: P.E Policy / +Swimming Policy  
School Tours / Outings  
Internet usage Policy  
Visitors to schools Policy

### **Implementation and Review**

The guidelines outlined in this policy are implemented with immediate effect (October 2011) and will be reviewed on an annual basis, following the check-list for review as outlined in Circular 2011. The school shall put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review. The BoM shall make arrangements to inform school personnel that the review has been undertaken. Written notification, that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the Parents' Association.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson, Board of Management

*(Photocopy of main body of DES Guidelines Chs 1-5 attached )*