

# St Clare's Primary School

## Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection has been revised and updated to reflect current guidelines and practice in September 2016

### Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

St. Clare's P.S. seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. We strive to create a happy, safe environment for the children where they feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect and their concerns will be addressed.

Our school is a Catholic School and we cherish all pupils equally and aid them in achieving their true potential as individuals

### Aims

- To raise awareness of child abuse namely, emotional, physical, sexual abuse and neglect, among all members of our school community including Board of Management, teachers, pupils, parents, SNAs, secretary and caretaker.
- 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.
- To identify curricular content and resources that contribute to the prevention of child abuse and to enable children to properly deal with abuse if it occurs.

### Roles and Responsibilities

- The Board of Management has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of their pupils.
- **Mr. Conlon** 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.

### Role of the Board of Management

- We will arrange **via the ISMT** for the planning, development and implementation of an effective child protection programme.
- We will monitor and evaluate its effectiveness annually or on request.
- We will provide appropriate staff development and training.
- We will appoint a DLP and deputy DLP.
- Have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse

The Board of Management implements without modification the new “Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools’ (2011) as part of their overall child protection policy.

The BOM will fully implement the Stay Safe programme which is mandatory. The BOM fully implement the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme which is mandatory ; use the standard template child protection policy which is in Appendix 1 of the DES Child Protection Procedures; name the DLP and deputy DLP in the school’s child protection policy; display the name of the DLP in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school and the school's child protection policy is available to all school personnel, the parents’ association and parents via the school website and on request.

At each board of management meeting the principal’s report shall state the number of reports made to the HSE by the DLP, since the last board of management meeting. The principal’s report shall state only the number and not include any other details (e.g. names of children etc.). The principal’s report shall also state the number of cases and may refer to the type of concern (e.g. neglect, emotional, physical, etc.) since the last board meeting, where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result referrals were made.

#### **Definition of Child Abuse:**

Child Abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

**Neglect:** can be defined in terms of an 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. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific moment. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child is being neglected.

**Emotional Abuse:** occurs when a child’s need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child’s behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. A child may be affected by an event in his/her life and staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child's emotional needs are being neglected.

**Physical Abuse:** is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child may have been physically abused.

**Sexual Abuse:** occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child may have been sexually abused.

### **Designated Liaison Person:**

The Board of Management has appointed School Principal **Stephanie Kelly** the Deputy Principal is the deputy DLP and in **John Conlon as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)** case of absence the Assistant Principal Fidelma Fox shall take on the duties of the deputy DLP.

The role of the DLP is to liaise with all relevant agencies, whether in seeking advice, reporting or in follow up consultations. If informed by a member of the school community of a concern the DLP should in the first instance seek advice by phone, from a senior child care officer/social worker/manager/designated person employed by the Health Board. At this early stage all parties including the DLP may remain anonymous and there is no requirement on the DLP to disclose the names of any party including the name of the school or her own name.

However, the DLP should note the name of any Health Board employee who gives advice. It is incumbent on the DLP to follow through on all advice from the Health Board.

Written records should be kept of all phone calls and meetings.

### **Basis for Reporting to a Health Board**

A health board should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. With regard to emotional abuse and/or physical neglect, consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional neglect or physical neglect would constitute reasonable grounds for concern.

### **Procedures in dealing with a disclosure/suspicion from a child/third party:**

- Teachers who suspect child abuse/neglect should report their concerns to the DLP at the first instance and carefully record their observations over a period of time.
- Disclosures of Child Abuse/neglect from a third party will be reported to the DLP. If a third party starts to tell a teacher about an alleged child abuse incident the teacher will ask them to speak to the DLP. If the person does not inform the DLP the teacher will do so.
- Where a child discloses alleged abuse/neglect to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively.
- It is not the staff member's role to investigate or question an allegation or suspicion. The staff member just listens and records as reported to them.
- Great care must be taken not to abuse the child's trust. This should not be a formal interview.
  - 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 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

Sign and date the record

Retain the record securely

- Whether cases of abuse/neglect are suspected or confirmed, confidentiality will be respected. The information on individual cases will be restricted to the teacher(s) immediately involved with the child and will be on a *need to know* basis.
- The DLP will record the incident. It is not the function of the teacher or the DLP to investigate the issue.
- 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.
- The Chairperson of the Board of Managements will be informed of the disclosure.
- Informal contact with the designated person in the Western Health Board will be made, seeking advice as to whether a referral should be made. The DLP will be explicit that s/he is requesting advice and not making a report. It is not necessary at this stage for the DLP to disclose his/her name or the name of the school.
- The advice given by the Health Board must be acted upon.
- If the advice is not to refer, the DLP will record this advice as the reason for non-referral. The chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed.
- If the advice from the Health Board is to refer the case, the DLP will do so. However, prior to referring, the DLP will inform the parent of her intention to refer, unless this course of action is injurious to the child.
- Following referral and the completion of the standard form, the school will have no further part to play in the investigation.
- If the Board is unhappy with the manner in which Tusla the child protection agency / Health Board deals with the issue raised by the school then the responsible agency should be informed in writing by the Board chairperson.
- If a CP case conference is called the DLP will attend.

All records will be held in a central, securely locked location.

### **Allegations against an employee:**

#### **Reporting (See appendix 1 and 2 for summary)**

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

- **Mr. Conlon / Stephanie Kelly** will immediately inform the chairperson.
- Procedures followed are similar to those of a disclosure
- Employee is made aware of the allegation against him/her
- Employee will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation in writing and at a meeting of the Board of Management

- BOM meeting to review the allegation, giving due consideration to any advice given by Health Board and Gardaí
- The BOM will consider placing the employee on administrative leave, with full pay, pending the outcome of investigations by the Health Board and Gardaí.

On conclusion of any investigation the BOM will then determine the employment status of the employee.

### **Role of the Staff Members (Teachers, SNAs, Caretaker, Secretary)**

- All Staff are aware of and provided with access to copies of the following guidelines in the school staff room and it is the responsibility of all staff to familiarise themselves with the guidelines.
  - *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES, 2001*
  - *Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 1999, especially*
    - *Chapter 3 Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse*
    - *Chapter 4 Basis for Reporting & Standard Reporting Procedures*
    - *Appendix 1 Signs and Symptoms Of Child Abuse*

### **Guidelines for teachers and staff members in handling**

#### **Disclosures from children**

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 not to abuse the child's trust. 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.

- The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate allegations of abuse.
- Mr Conlon should then be informed and given relevant records.
- If the suspected abuser is the DLP or a close associate of the DLP then the suspicion and any records will be passed on to the Chairperson Mr Kieran Ryan who will proceed as per guidelines.

### **Suspicious of Abuse**

- Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 1999, which will be readily available in the staff room Book Rack at all times. Staff should especially note
  - *Chapter 3 :Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse*
  - *Chapter 4: Basis for Reporting and Standard Reporting Procedures*
  - *Appendix 1:Signs and Symptoms Of Child Abuse*
- Staff members should **observe and record** over time the dates, signs, symptoms, behaviour causing them concern.
- They should inform the DLP and pass on all records.

### **Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP - Mr Conlon)**

- Mr. Conlon 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 Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES and Children First Guidelines in the school. S/he will circulate the DES guidelines and photocopy/circulate to all staff Chapters 3 & 4 & Appendix 1 of the Children First guidelines and advise on good practice
- The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. S/he 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 An Garda Síochána based on this advice.
- The DLP will maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.
- The DLP will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.

### **Organisational Implications and Prevention of Child Abuse**

#### **Gáarda Vetting**

All staff employed by the BOM will not be allowed work with the children until they are vetted or in the process of being vetted in cases of delay in administration.

The Teaching Council arrange teacher vetting for newly qualified teachers.

Staff will be asked for copies of their vetting forms and these will be kept on file in the principal's office. We are advised that all the current teaching staff, excluding those newly appointed, will be vetted by the Teaching Council in due course.

### **Supervision**

School supervision policy and routines will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks.

### **Behaviour**

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

### **Visibility**

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school yard. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or shelters where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school yard or to engage with adults who are outside of the school yard.

After servers will be allowed out of school only from 6<sup>th</sup> class. They will only be allowed leave the school with specific written approval of guardians and a minimum of 3 children will go together. Individual servers must be collected and signed out of school by the parent /guardian.

### **Visitors**

Teachers on yard duty will be aware of visitors entering the school yard and will ascertain their intentions. They will be supervised in the discharge of their business. All school entrance/exit doors are electronically locked after the children enter the school. Visitors cannot enter the school without contacting the office by using the bell and intercom and giving their reason for entry.

### **Swimming**

Children will attend the swimming pool under the teacher's direction. All adults assisting with supervision in the changing rooms will act in 'loco parentis' and as such will act as prudent parents and only helping supervising / children only as required. Parent helpers will be briefed around our swimming procedures.

### **Children travelling in staff cars**

Teachers will not carry children alone in their cars. At least three children must travel with the teacher in the car or another adult and 2 children.

### **Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of this policy and the Children First Guidelines (1999).

### **Dealing with children on a one-to-one basis**

Open Door policy always applies to staff and visiting professionals. If a staff member/visiting professional such as Speech and Language therapist/ Occupational therapist has to work/deal/communicate with children on a one-to-one basis, they

are requested to leave the classroom door open if there is not a glass partition fitted on the door. A glass partition has been fitted in the doors of resource/special needs rooms.

### **Attendance**

With regards to child protection we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance, late arrivals or early leaving. Children must be signed out or signed in by an adult if arriving late or leaving early. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/ physical/ emotional abuse.

### **Toileting Accidents**

Adults working with children with intimate care needs will always make sure that any physical contact is for the purpose of meeting the needs of the child. Adults will always respect the dignity of the child. Intimate care forms will be required to be signed by guardians where this care is considered an essential requirement of any child .

### **DVDs**

Staff will always ensure that any DVD shown to the children is age appropriate. St. Clare's P.S. is a primary school and as such the following are the only DVDs that should be shown to children:

General Viewing (G)

Parental Guidance (PG)

12 A (for children who are twelve years old with adult supervision)

No DVDs/websites etc... rated as suitable for 15 year olds, 18 year olds or adults will be shown to the children.

### **Curriculum Implications**

We will at all times try to create a positive school climate which is open, inclusive, respectful, fair, democratic and tolerant and which seeks to support the holistic development of all children and all adults working with our children. The strategies we will use to create this environment are detailed in our SPHE Plan and will involve:

- Creating a health-promoting physical environment
- Enhancing self-esteem
- Fostering respect for diversity
- Building effective communication within the school
- Developing appropriate home-school communication
- Catering for individual needs
- Developing democratic processes
- Fostering inclusive and respectful language.

We strive to ensure that our school will be physically and emotionally safe and we will deliver the curricular content of our SPHE programme with a view to



giving our children the protective skills of self-esteem and assertiveness. The circle time and bubble time methodologies will be used on a whole school basis.

**The No-Blame approach will be adopted in our Anti-Bullying policy.** Co-operative interpersonal skills will be developed through working in pairs and working in groups. Older children will be encouraged to work positively and skills in negotiation, building consensus and managing conflict will be developed.

### **Junior and Senior Infants**

Infant teachers will teach content objectives as laid out under the 10 strand units in our SPHE programme. They are

- Self Identity
- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection
- Making decisions
- Myself and my family
- My friends and other people
- Relating to others
- Developing citizenship.

We hope to enable children to develop assertiveness, body integrity, skills relating to self-care, respect for others, identification of feelings and skills necessary to recognise and tell of abuse.

### **1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> classes**

In implementing our SPHE programme as laid out under the 10 strand units named above we hope to enable the children to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes pertaining to self-esteem, esteem for others and the environment and skills pertaining to self-care and disclosure. Healthy eating, information on substance use and anti-bullying awareness will be introduced.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes**

Our SPHE programme will again be implemented according to the 10 strand units. Knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in previous classes will be built on. Children will be enabled to develop intra-personal skills and inter-personal skills. As children mature they will be challenged to develop their decision-making skills. They will be encouraged to develop self-protection skills pertaining to smoking and alcohol. Peer pressure and the influence of internet access and social media will also be examined. The development of self-esteem, esteem for others, assertiveness, awareness of feelings, and skills around self-protection and disclosure will underpin our teaching.

### **5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes**

Our SPHE programme will be implemented according to the curricular objectives as laid out under the 10 strands in the SPHE Curriculum. Skills,

knowledge and attitudes developed in earlier classes will be enhanced. Children will continue to develop self-awareness and positive attitudes to themselves, others, their environment and the wider world in which they live. Self protection and respect for others will be fostered, decision-making skills developed, peer influence and media bias examined. Knowledge in relation to legal and illegal drugs and the prevention of substance misuse will be further developed. Children will be enabled to develop good group-building skills, anti-bullying awareness and conflict resolution skills. Self-protection will be emphasised and protection of younger, less able people. Positive attitudes to sexuality will be developed and respect for self and others fostered (see RSE section of SPHE policy).

**The SPHE programme will be supported by the use of the Walk Tall materials, RSE resources, Alive o Religious programme, Stay Safe resources and North-Western Health board resources.**

**The impact of the internet / social media and related issues will be under annual consideration in relation to training of staff , parents and pupils**

**Guidelines for the DLP in handling reported concerns and disclosures and in dealing with the Child and family agency / Tusla .**

- Where the DLP/Deputy DLP have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the Child and Family agency they should seek appropriate advice.

To do this the DLP/Deputy should make informal contact with the assigned (on duty) Tusla Worker. The DLP/Deputy in this case, should be explicit that s/he is requesting advice and not making a report. If advised to report the matter, the DLP will act on that advice.

**Phone Number 0719650300 or 0719650324**

- A report will then be made to the Child and Family agency by the DLP/Deputy in person, by telephone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of Tusla staff, the report should be made to the Gardaí. The DLP should also report the matter to the Mr .Kieran Ryan, who should then follow the procedures as outlined in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3) of Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 1999.
- A standard reporting form is completed by the DLP/Deputy as comprehensively as possible (See Appendix 1, Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES).
- Parents/guardians will normally be informed that a report is being made. It may be decided that informing the parent/carer is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. The decision not to inform the parent/carer should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

- When the allegation is against the DLP, the chairperson then assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to Tusla and filling in the standard reporting form.
- Where there are allegations or suspicions of Peer Abuse the DLP will follow the same procedures.
  - Parents 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, to resolve the matter.
  - The school will make arrangements to minimise the possibility of the abusive behaviour recurring.

### **Child Protection Meetings / Case Conferences**

- A request is made from Tusla / HSE through the DLP who should consult with the Chairperson of the B.O.M. of the school. The Chairperson may seek clarification through the DLP as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present.
- The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference. (See Appendix 3, Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES).
- 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 Tusla staff, should 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
- Teachers attending a child protection meeting/case conference should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined on pgs. 149 – 155 of Children First Guidelines, 1999; pgs. 13-14 Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES.

We will evaluate the success of this policy using the following criteria:

- 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**

At the first staff meeting of every year the DLP will remind all teachers of the guidelines and copies of Chapter 3 & 4 & Appendix 1 of The Children First Guidelines and Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES will be given to those who require them.

A review will be conducted based on the criteria above, following any and all incidents when the guidelines are used.

**Responsibility for Review annually by the** D.L.P with all the I.S.M.T.

This updated child protection policy was ratified by the Board of Management in March 2017. This policy is an update of previous policy and reflective of current advice and practice.

This policy will be communicated the policy to all new parents via the school website and blog and available in the information outside the school office or a copy on request.

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

Chairperson of B.O.M.