

Ballinlough National School,
Ballinlough,
Kells, County Meath.



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Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement:

The staff, parents and Board of Management of **Ballinlough National School** 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 responsibility of the school in the following areas:

Prevention-Curricular provision

Procedures-procedures for dealing with concern/disclosures

Practice-best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and a copy of the Dept of Education and Science “*Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures*” will be made available to all staff. This policy will be presented to parents at the time of enrolment of their child and will be available for viewing in the school.

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

In this policy the word “staff” applies to all school employees including teachers, SNAs, secretary and caretaker staff.

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 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.

Guidelines

1.0 Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

2.0 Roles, Responsibilities

2.1 Role of the Board of Management

2.2 Role of the staff members

2.3 Role of the DLP

3.0 Case Conferences

4.0 Organisational Implications

5.0 Prevention

1 .Appointment of a DLP(Designated Liaison Person)

a)The Board of Management have appointed Tanya Farrelly as the DLP in Ballinlough N.S. to have specific responsibility for child protection.

b)Carmel Reilly has been appointed Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP if he/she is unavailable.

c)The position of DLP will be addressed at the first meeting of each new Board of Management, The DLP will continue to act as such until such time as he/she is replaced by the BOM for whatever reason.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

- • The BOM has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of their pupils.
- 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.

1.1Role of the Board of Management

- a. To arrange for the planning, development, implementation of an effective child protection programme
- b. To monitor and evaluate its effectiveness

c. To provide appropriate staff development and training

Specifically they will

- Appoint a DLP and DDLP
- 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 which have been reported to the Health Board or the Gardai.
- To decide on teachers attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and to advise teachers before attending such meetings/ conferences.

Procedures for BOM in cases of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by a school

employee:

2.2.1

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

(i)The DLP will immediately inform the chairperson

(ii)He/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.

(iii)The DLP will seek advice from the relevant Health Board and will take responsibility for reporting based on this advice.

(iv)If the DLP following consultation with the Health Board, decides that this matter is not for reporting, he/she must inform the Chairperson. They must 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 relevant Health Board or Gardai 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.

(v)If the DLP. Following consultation with the Health Board, decides that this matter is for reporting he/she should inform the Chairperson, who should proceed in accordance with the procedures in the Child Protection Guidelines (1996 pg 16)

(vi)The DLP?DDL? completes a standard reporting form as comprehensively as possible.

(vii)When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse he/she will always seek legal advice and base his/her response on this advice.

(viii) He /She 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 Health Board (4.2 - 4.4. pg 16 Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures DES 2001). The Chairperson has a duty to afford the employee fairness and due process- He/She is entitled to details and a copy of the written allegation, to advice and representation and an opportunity to respond to the Board within a week.

B. Responding

- i. When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse he/she will always seek legal advice and base his/her response on this advice.
- ii. The Chairperson will consider whether there is any risk to pupils' safety. If the Chairperson consider that there is a risk – He/she may require the employee to take immediate administrative leave. If unsure the chairperson will consult with the Healthboard/Gardai.
- iii. If administrative leave has been invoked, the chairperson will inform the DES. The Health Board (in some cases the Gardaí) may also be notified in accordance with legal advice received.
- iv. Once it is deemed necessary by the DLP and Chairperson to make a report (after receiving advice from the Health Board) the Chairperson will convene and inform a meeting of the BOM as soon as possible.
- v. 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 BOM will investigate the matter. They will convene a further meeting, once the relevant information has been gathered. At this meeting the BOM will consider in detail:
 - The allegations made and their source.
 - The advice given by relevant authorities
 - And the written responses of the employee.
- vi. At this meeting also:
 - The person/agency who is alleging abuse by the school employee should be offered an opportunity to present his/her case to the BOM and may be accompanied by another person
 - Parents/guardians may act on behalf of child
 - The employee should also be afforded an opportunity to present their case and may also be accompanied.
- vii. The BOM must deal with the matter sensitively and the employee must be fairly treated.
- viii. The BOM will make a decision on action, if any, based on their investigation and will inform the employee of this in writing. They will also inform the DES of the outcome, if the employee has been absent on administrative leave.

ix. Where it is not possible for the BOM 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 Health Board and receive reports and records from them where appropriate.

2.2 Role of the Staff Member (to include Teachers, SNA's, Caretaker, Secretary etc)

a) **It is the responsibility of all teachers and staff members to familiarise themselves with the Children First National Guideline 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
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b) **Guidelines for teachers and staff in handling.....**

1. 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 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.
- 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.

2.2 Suspicious of Abuse:-

- a. Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to *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 and Standard Reporting Procedures
 - Appendix 1: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse.

b. Staff Members should observe and record over time the dates/signs/symptoms/behaviour causing them concern.

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

2.3 Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

- a. The DLP acts as a liaison with outside agencies, Health Boards, Gardaí and other parties with child protection concerns.
- b. The DLP will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Children First Guidelines in the school. He/she will photocopy and circulate to all staff Chapters 3 & 4 Appendix 1 of these guidelines and advise on good practice.
- c. The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. He/She will keep records of these consultations.
- d. The DLP will seek advice from the Health Board.
- e. The DLP will report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to the Health Board or/and Garda Síochána based on this advice.
- f. The DLP will maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.
- g. The DLP will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.

Guideline for the DLP in handling reported concerns and disclosures

- a. Where the DLP/Deputy DLP have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the Health Board, they should seek appropriate advice. To do this the DLP/Deputy should make informal contact with the assigned (on duty) Social Worker. The DLP/deputy in this case, should be explicit that he/she is requesting advice and not making a report. If advised to report the matter, the DLP will act on that advice.
- b. A report will then be made to the Health Board by the DLP/DDLP in person, by phone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of Health Board staff, the report should be made to the Gardai. The DLP should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the BOM, 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)
- c. A standard reporting form is completed by the DLP/DDLP as comprehensively as possible.
- d. 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.
- e. 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 follow the same procedures
- 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

3.0 Child Protection Meetings (Case Conferences)

- a. A request is made from the Health Board through the DLP who should consult with the Chairperson of the BOM of the school. The Chairperson may seek clarification through the DLP as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary to ascertain who else will be present
- b. The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference
- c. The school employee will be advised if children/parents/guardians are to be present. The school employee may contact the Chairperson of the Child Protection Meeting for advice.
- d. 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.
- e. In all cases individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with Health Board 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.
- f. Teachers attending a Child Protection conference/meeting should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined on pgs 149-155 of Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

4.0 Organisational Implications

The staff of Ballinlough NS have identified the following areas and agreed good practice guidelines as follows:

(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 its 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 cannot do for themselves.

(b) 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

(c) Behaviour

Children are to be encouraged to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under the Code of Behaviour. If an incident of a sexual nature occurs we the DLP will be notified who will record it and respond appropriately.

(d) Visitors

All visitors on arrival must report to the office. Teachers will be aware of visitors entering the school grounds and will ascertain their intentions. They will be supervised in the discharge of their business.

(e) Guest Speakers

The teacher will always be present when outside speakers speak to our classes.

(f) One to One teaching

Where one to one teaching is required it will be in an open room situation with clear visibility from the outside room

(g) Swimming Pool Supervision

Two staff members will accompany all school groups on swimming trips. They will supervise both boys and girls changing rooms together. Teachers will not assist children dressing or undressing. Where children have special needs, particular arrangements will

be agreed with parents/guardians. If younger children need assistance with changing, it is the duty of parents to make appropriate arrangements.

(h)Transporting children in staff cars

When children have to be carried in staff cars teachers will ensure that there will always be at least two children in the car together.

(i)Toileting Accidents

In situations where parents are unable to attend to a child's needs immediately the teacher, along with another staff member will assist the child in order to minimise upset to the child. Clean underwear will be kept in the school in case of an "accident" and be provided to the child. A written record will be made in the "Incidents Book" and parents will be notified

(j)Intimate Care

In cases where children have specific toileting needs arrangements will be agreed with parents on enrolment. Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/ toileting needs. The staff to be involved in this arrangement are to be identified and provision will be made for particular occasions when these staff members are not present.

(k) Computers/Mobile Phones

As part of our Anti-Bullying policy children are encouraged to use the Internet in a safe and responsible way. Children are supervised at all times as per A.U.P (Acceptable Use Policy). Where a parent feels it absolutely necessary that their child needs to bring a mobile phone to school, it must be turned off while in the school and kept in the child's bag .

(l) First Aid

(see Health & safety Policy)

(m) Walking to Church/Hall

Two adults will accompany all groups going to the Church/Hall. One adult will lead the group and the other will follow at the rear of the group. Children will be aware of best practice regarding Road safety

(n)Record keeping

Teachers will keep each child's file, updated with results of assessments carried out, date & details of meetings with parents, parent's notes to be kept in teacher's drawer. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need to know basis. More details are to be found in the school's Record keeping policy.

(o)Photography /Media

Consent forms are sent out in September seeking parental consent to allow children's names and photos be used on school noticeboards, school website, newsletters, local newspapers. Consent is also sought to allow children be featured in the video recording of school concerts/ First Holy Communion etc

(p)Attendance

Our school attendance will be monitored on a daily basis. With regards to Child Protection we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

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 "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

Reviewed 2011:

Following additions:

A copy of the policy will be kept in the office and each of the teacher's classrooms

A copy of the policy will be given to BOM members, PA, SNA and ancillary staff.

All staff will receive Child Protection training each year

Stay Safe Programme will be implemented in each class

Each report to the DLP or DDLP will be dated and signed

The policy will be revised each year

Links to other policy/planning areas

SPHE curriculum, Code of Discipline, Anti- Bullying, Health & Safety statement, Information and Communication Technology Special needs, Swimming Policy, School Tours/Outings, Attendance, Record Keeping

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored 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.A report will be made at each BOM meeting re Child Protection.

Policy adopted by the Board of Management____28/92011_____

This code was drafted in accordance with the requirements of the Dept of Education and Skills procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools.

DLP Tanya Farrelly

DDL P Carmel Reilly