

St. Brigid's School

Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement

The staff, parents and management of St. Brigid's 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 responsibilities of the school in the following 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. It is the responsibility of all staff to familiarize themselves with:-

- 'Children First' - Department of Health & Children 1999
- 'Child Protection' - Department of Education & Science 2001

Rationale

This policy further develops previous policy and takes account of the provisions of the following legislation:-

- The Education Act 1998
- The Child Welfare Act 2000

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

This policy reflects the mission statement of our school:-

School Mission Statement

- *Respecting each other*
- *Expecting our best*
- *Sharing Our Achievements*
- *Learning Together in a Happy School*

Everyone at St. Brigid's School is valued and respected. Our vision is to provide a happy, safe and stimulating environment where high expectations allow both staff and children to achieve their best.

In our school, we will help our children to develop the desire and skills to enjoy learning throughout life.

We foster the self-esteem of individuals and encourage them to become healthy, responsible citizens and to make positive contributions to the wider community.

The school motto is:

Education For Life

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

Prevention

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used in the Junior 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 Senior School and the Pre-Vocational units will cover this topic in SPHE. Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

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' will be provided.

Procedures

All staff (teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking, bus escorts, 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 31 to 42 from Children First).

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The Board of Management of this school has appointed Mrs. Patricia Ward (Principal) as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Mrs. Marion McKeivitt (Deputy Principal) and the deputy DLP.

The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with Health Boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of child abuse should be processed through the DLP.

Further information on the responsibilities of the DLP is included in 'Child Protection DES' - Pg 8 - Section 2.2. Actions to be taken by the DLP in cases where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or where an allegation has been made are in 'Child Protection DES' Chapter 3 - Section 3.2 pg 11 - 12.

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.
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report

Confidentiality

The issue of confidentiality is of the utmost importance when dealing with issues and concerns regarding possible child abuse. (see Appendix p.41)

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a need to know basis and with the interests of the child first.

The DLP will decide who needs to know.

Giving information to those who need to have that information, for the protection of a child who may have been or has been abused, is not a breach of confidentiality.

The DLP who is submitting a report to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place that child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

In emergency situations, where the Health Board cannot be contacted, and the child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána should be contacted immediately.

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of An Garda Síochána.

The act provides significant protection for employees who report child abuse. This protection covers all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal. (Child Protection DES Book page 6.)

Practice

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

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

Visitors/Guest Speakers

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. An SNA will be in the classroom whenever there is a guest speaker. The school 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. Visitors will be escorted to appropriate area by staff and will wear name badges, identifying them to staff and students.

Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs

A general letter on intimate care will be sent home to all parents. Any deviation from this procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parent/guardians.

The school will endeavour to keep clean underwear and suitable clothing in the school so that if a pupil has toileting 'accident' they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change. Where 'accidents' are more frequent, parents will be requested to provide fresh clothing and soiled clothing will be returned home.

If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves the child will be assisted by two members of staff familiar to the child.

A record of all such incidents will be kept and the principal and parents will be notified. A standard letter will be available for notifying parents and if necessary a meeting will be convened.

One to one teaching

It is the policy in this school that one to one teaching is sometimes in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment.

Changing for games/PE

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/PE/swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in communal areas and with the consent of parents. At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils. While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined

above, in the event of an emergency were this is not possible or practicable, a full record of the incident should be made and reported to the 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: Swimming Policy
School Tours/Outings
Sports Events

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Policy adopted by the BOM on _____

Signed: _____