

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

In the school mission statement the first paragraph states that the school should provide a secure, happy and caring community where Christian principles and standards are held and where every individual matters so that each child can grow and develop to his or her full potential, creating a sense of personal worth and mutual respect.

This aim underlines the need to recognise the importance of each child's welfare and well-being, both inside and outside school.

We, in Lisnagelvin, have a statutory responsibility to safeguard the welfare, care and safety of the children in our charge.

While the school values parents as the first educators and providers for their children and seeks to involve them in all aspects of school life, governors and teachers recognise the need on some occasions to protect children entrusted to their care and this should be done discreetly in the child's interest and also respecting the rights of parents and families.

Our positive behaviour and anti-bullying policies are also important features of our child protection procedures. Clear guidelines are set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy of what we expect and how incidences will be dealt with. The Anti-bullying policy sets out clearly the procedures for dealing with incidences of bullying and what measures will be taken to deal with/help both the victim and the bully. We have also a policy on Safe Handling which also gives guidelines for the staff.

We also seek to protect our pupils by integrating personal safety programmes into the curriculum for each year group. This includes a drugs awareness programme. Our Drugs Policy sets out the procedures for dealing with drugs related incidences.

Our procedures in the child protection policy are to protect our pupils and to that end we strive to ensure that everyone who works in our school, teachers, L.S.As, non-teaching staff and volunteers have a clear guidance on the action that is required where neglect or abuse of a child is suspected. If a member of staff has concerns that a child may have been abused by an adult or sibling then action must be taken to protect the child at all costs.

Aims of the policy

- To provide a safe, caring environment
- To enhance children's self-esteem, self-confidence and personal safety.
- To ensure all staff are informed about school procedures for reporting concerns as outlined by DENI guidelines.
- To ensure all staff are aware of their duty to care and have a responsibility to report any concerns.
- To promote co-operation with statutory agencies in the multi-agency response to child protection.

Implementation of the policy

- Provide a listening environment within the school and classrooms in which every child is valued as a member of the community.
- Allow a variety of opportunities for class discussion through quality circle-time to build an atmosphere of trust, acceptance and tolerance.
- Integrate the key concepts within the existing curriculum, through Personal Development and Mutual Understanding lessons, as well as input from outside agencies e.g. Hope UK, P.S.N.I.
- Identify people to whom the children can turn with their concerns or problems, making use of N.S.P.C.C. counsellors or Childline.
- Monitoring children's welfare and physical, emotional, social and behavioural development by the use of concern sheets.
- Providing staff training and promoting awareness of the types and indicators of the four categories of abuse.
- Informing staff as to the procedures for reporting concerns to the designated teacher, making clear how concerns are to be recorded.
- Establishing contact with outside agencies such as The Gateway Team, Social Services and Action for Children.
- Obtaining parental consent for taking photographs and safe use of the internet.
- Informing parents of the Child Protection policy.

Role of the Designated teacher.

- Responsibility to train all school staff in Child Protection.
- Liaise with outside agencies e.g. Gateway, Social Services, Action for Children, N.S.P.C.C, etc.
- Keep a centralised copy of Child Protection records.
- Provide relevant information as requested by Gateway Team, Social Services etc.
- Responsible for discussing child protection issues with staff who have registered a concern.
- Responsible for informing ELB designated officer when a referral is made.
- Attend any appropriate case conferences or case planning meetings
- Keep the principal informed of any issues that may arise.
- Make an annual report to the Board of Governors.
- Be available to staff or children who may wish to express concerns or disclose any information in respect of a Child Protection issue.

Designated teachers

The Board of Governors has nominated Mrs Alison Dougherty as the designated teacher responsible in the first instance for dealing with child protection issues. Mrs Janice Caldwell and Miss Karen Davison have been nominated as the deputy designated teachers with responsibility for this area. Mrs. Linda Smith is the Designated Governor.

Principal

While child protection matters are designated to the delegated teachers, the Principal still maintains the responsibility for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy. He should meet regularly with the delegated teacher to discuss matters in confidence, act decisively and promptly when the occasion arises, discuss child protection at staff meetings and support staff in all ways, particularly by providing in-service training where appropriate.

Safeguarding Team

Safeguarding Team is made up of the Principal, Vice-Principal, Designated and Deputy Designated teachers, Chairman of B.O.G. and the Designated Governor. This team will meet at least once a year.

Procedure for reporting an incident of child abuse

If a child makes a disclosure to his/her teacher or if a teacher has concerns about a child as a result of observations over a period of time, then he/she should:

- make notes of what was said or observed
- notes to be written in the language used by the child
- act promptly by referring the matter to the designated teacher.

At this meeting the matter should be discussed fully, with the designated teacher making comprehensive notes. It is then the duty of the designated teacher to meet with the Principal or Vice Principal, in the case of the Principal's absence, to plan a course of action and ensure a written record is made. This action may include contacting the local Social Services Office, the designated officer for the Western Education and Library Board or a deputy, (Marion McBride, Godfrey Young or Martin McQuaid), the Gateway Team and /or the Chairman of the Board of Governors. At all times the need to maintain confidentiality is crucial and information should only be passed on, on a need to know basis.

(See Appendix - Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse)

The designated teacher will keep a record of the nature of the information,

- who gave it,
- the time, date and
- circumstances and where the concern relates to signs or symptoms of possible abuse, a description of these.

The record should be supplemented with details of any advice sought, from whom and when, the decision reached as to whether the case should be referred to Social Services and if so, how and when this was done. If the case is not referred then reasons for this decision should also be noted.

All record keeping will be treated in the strictest confidence in line with the Data Protection Act 1984.

Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation; the child must be seen in the family setting. If this avenue does not provide solutions to the problem then assistance should be sought from outside agencies.

Role of the child

Whenever a child makes an allegation of abuse, whether that be physical, sexual, emotional or neglect, that child has a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. The listener should ensure that confidentiality is maintained by withdrawing the child from the class/group to listen to the evidence.

Handling information

Where there are concerns about possible child abuse it is important that a record is kept at all stages. Teachers have a copy of a concern sheet. These are available from the Designated Teacher as is a disclosure or incident form.

- Concern Forms are to be filled in by the teacher and signed when recording a concern
- These are to be kept by the teacher in a safe place.
- These are to be returned to the D.T. at the end of the academic year.
- The forms will be filed by the Designated Teacher.
- It is not the duty of the class teacher to pass on any concerns to the next year's teacher, this will be done by the D.T.
- Recording an incident is done by the teacher and then passed on immediately to the D.T.
- These will be stored in a secure place.
- Appropriate action will be taken by the Designated Teacher in consultation with the Principal.

Procedure for handling complaints

(See Appendix - Making a Complaint)

School Staff

If a complaint is made against a member of staff, the Principal will immediately inform the designated teacher who will initiate the record of the complaint. He will then inform and consult with the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the designated officer of the Western Education

and Library Board to ascertain whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant further action.

If the decision is made to continue the investigation, an immediate referral to the Social Services or the PSNI will be made. Where the complaint relates to inappropriate teaching content or certain types of bullying behaviour, it will be addressed under the disciplinary procedures.

If it is decided to take no further action the Principal will advise the member of staff accordingly, inform the designated officer of the Western Education and Library Board and advise, in writing, the complainant.

When a formal referral is made, an immediate decision whether to suspend the member of staff with pay as a precautionary measure will be made by either the Principal or the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

Principal

If a complaint is made against the Principal the same procedures are followed with the Chairman of the Board of Governors assuming the role of the Principal.

Governors and Volunteers:

If an accusation is made against a governor, the Principal should immediately inform the Chairman and the designated officer of the Western Education and Library Board and in the case of a complaint against the Chairman, then the Vice-Chairman should be informed and procedures outlined above should be followed.

Any complaint against a person working in a voluntary capacity in the school should be treated in the same way as a member of staff. If the Principal has any concern that a child may be at risk, the services of the volunteer should be terminated immediately.

Making children aware of potential problems

The school uses the Be Safe Programme to make the children aware of the various dangers which might confront them. In addition, through the Police Education Programme children are made aware by officers of the

need to say no to strangers, and various role plays are portrayed. Safe use of the Internet is also encouraged.

Teacher - recognising abuse

Teachers should be made aware of the indicators which may be evidence of abuse. Recognising these signs and symptoms may be difficult and all staff are advised to become familiar with the physical and behavioural indicators for physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse as set out on pages 6 and 7 of the Western Education and Library Board Child Protection Guidelines.

All staff are given refresher training every 2 years.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse means ill treatment or neglect leading to physical, sexual or emotional injury or harm. The following illustrations outline common indicators. These are signs, not a checklist. Some could have other explanations.

Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators.

- Unexplained bruises or burns particularly if they are recurrent.
- Human bite marks, welts or bald spots.
- Unexplained lacerations, fractures or abrasions
- Untreated injuries.

Behavioural Indicators.

- Self destructive tendencies
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Chronic runaway
- Aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of returning home
- Reluctant to have physical contact
- Clothing inappropriate to weather to hide part of the body.

Neglect

Physical Indicators

- Constant hunger
- Poor state of clothing and/or personal hygiene
- Untreated medical problems
- Emaciation/distended stomach
- Constant tiredness

Behavioural Indicators

- Tiredness, listlessness
- Lack of social relationships
- Compulsive stealing, begging or scavenging
- Low self-esteem.

Emotional

Physical Indicators

- Sudden speech disorder
- Signs of mutilation
- Signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness)
- Wetting and/or soiling
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Poor peer relationships

Behavioural Indicators

- Neurotic behaviour (e.g. hair twisting, rocking, thumb sucking)
- Reluctance for parent liaison
- Fear of new situations
- Chronic runaway
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations.

Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators

- Soreness or bleeding in the genital areas or anal areas or in the throat
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothes
- Chronic ailments such as stomach pains or headaches
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Venereal diseases
- Unexplained pregnancies

Behavioural Indicators

- Chronically depressed
- Inappropriately seductive or precocious
- Sexually explicit language
- Low self-esteem, self-devaluation, lack of confidence
- Recurring nightmares, fear of the dark
- Outbursts of anger/hysteria
- Overly protective of siblings

Code of Conduct.

Child Protection booklet summarises a code of conduct for all staff within the education sector. Conduct relating to private meetings with pupils, physical contact with pupils, choice and use of teaching materials and relationships and attitudes are highlighted

(Circular 1999/10 Pastoral Care in Schools)

The role of the Education Welfare Officer

The Principal and designated teacher should liaise with the Education Welfare Officer when appropriate because there are occasions when the Welfare Officer might be in a position to add family background to a school's knowledge of a child.

Vetting of all staff

The Human Resources Department of the Western Education and Library Board will be asked to confirm that clearance has been given by the PSNI and any other agencies prior to the employment of any member of staff.

From time to time the school uses volunteers (mainly parents) to assist in school under the guidance of classroom teachers. In line with the guidance given in DENI Circular 2008/03 forms will be used to seek references for these individuals and they will be informed that a police check, through Access NI, will be made prior to their work commencing in school.

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors accepts this policy and has delegated its responsibility to the Principal and his staff. The Principal will inform the Chairman of the Board when a serious incident occurs as outlined above.

Let us all endeavour to make our school a safe and happy environment in which both staff and children can work.

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration”

Article 3 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child