

Scoil Chearbhaill Uí Dhálaigh

Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement

- (a) This policy was drafted during the 2009-2010 school year by two members of the Board of Management in consultation with the teaching staff and the parents.
- (b) A Child Protection policy is being prepared at this time to provide guidance and advice to the Board of Management and to all school staff when dealing with reports or concerns of abuse of children.
- (c) A summary of the school's Child Protection Policy is displayed in a prominent place in the school and a note regarding the policy is included in the Booklet for Parents. It is also published on the school website- www.scoilchearbhaill.com. All parents/guardians are made aware of the Policy and how it is available from the school.

The school Board of Management has adopted the Children First Guidelines issued by The Department of Health and Children, 1999 and The Department of Education and Skills Guidelines on Child Protection, 2001.

Designated Liaison Person [DLP]

The principal, Deirdre Ní Dhuillearga, is the DLP named by the Board of Management. Should she be unavailable, the Deputy Principal, Maebh Uí Irile, or the Assistant Principal, Bríd Ní Sheachnasaigh, both of whom are also named as DLP by the Board of Management, will act in her stead. The DLP has particular responsibility for child protection. He/she will represent the school in all dealings with the Health Services Executive, an Garda Síochána and other parties in relation to allegations of child abuse. All matters relating to processing and investigation of allegations of child abuse should be done through the DLP.

Guidelines for recognising child abuse

The complete context of the child's case, the family circumstances and all signs and airíonna must be investigated. The following three steps are generally taken to identify child abuse:

- Consider the possibility

- Be alert to signs of abuse
- Record all information

Procedure for dealing with disclosures from children

When a child discloses information about abuse in confidence, the member of staff will need to be tactful and sensitive in dealing with the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child, and retain his/her trust, while explaining the need for action and the possible consequences which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support him/her, but not to make promises that cannot be kept, e.g. promising not to tell anyone else. The child's welfare must take precedence over all other considerations. The child's wishes must be considered, as far as possible, taking into account his/her age and understanding. The following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child reveals information about abuse:

- Remain calm
- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions
- Accept each disclosure with prudence
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events
- Do not over-react
- Explain that further help may need to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record- dates, times, places, number of occasions, context and factual details of the conversation

This information should be given to the DLP and the record retained in the school.

If the member of staff and the DLP are satisfied that concern/allegation is reasonably founded, the DLP should report the matter immediately. The reporting procedure as laid out in the *Children First Guidelines*, leathanach 38, mír 4.4. appendix 10, page 38, section 4.4. should be adhered to.

The chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed before the DLP contacts the relevant authorities, unless there is a need to act immediately to ensure the child's safety. In such a case, the chairperson may be informed after the relevant authorities have been notified.

The professional who has concerns about child abuse should inform the child's parents/guardians if a report is being made to the HSE or to An Garda Síochána except in cases where it is considered that doing so would endanger the child.

In emergency cases, if it is considered that the child is in immediate danger and a duty social worker cannot be contacted, An Garda Síochána should be notified.

A child in an emergency situation should not, under any circumstances, be left waiting for the HSE.

Allegations against members of staff

Child protection and safety is the most important consideration to be taken into account by the Chairperson of the Board of Management, by the Board of Management and by the DLP. It is important, nonetheless, that the employee is treated fairly in cases of malicious or false allegations. The Board of Management, as an employer, should always seek legal advice in such cases because the circumstances vary from case to case.

There are two procedures to be followed:

- i) Reporting procedure regarding the allegation
- ii) Procedure for dealing with the employee

The DLP is responsible for reporting the matter to the relevant section of the HSE. The Chairperson of the Board of Management, in consultation with the rest of the members of the Board of Management, is responsible for dealing with the details of the employment. If the allegation of child abuse is against the DLP, however, the Chairperson of the Board of Management assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE. .

Reporting Procedure

When an allegation of child abuse is made against a staff member, the DLP should act immediately following the procedure as outlined in The Child Protection Guidelines. A written statement should be sought from the person/agent who has made the allegation (parents/guardians may furnish a statement on behalf of a child). The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

All school employees, except the DLP, should immediately report allegations of child abuse against a school employee to the DLP.

School employees who have concerns about a school employee's behaviour should consult the DLP regarding their concerns. The DLP should then follow the procedures as laid down in The Child Protection Guidelines.

Action to be taken by the Chairperson of the Board of Management

When the Chairperson of the Board of Management receives an allegation of child abuse against a school employee, he/she should inform the employee in private of the following:

- i. That an allegation of child abuse has been made against him/her
- ii. The nature of the allegation
- iii. Whether the matter has been reported by the DLP to the HSE or not

A written copy of the allegation and any other relevant documentation should be given to the employee. The employee should be requested to furnish a written reply to the Board of Management within a specified period.

It should be explained to the employee that his/her reply to the Board of Management must be forwarded to An Garda Síochána, to the HSE and to legal advisors.

Avoiding placing the child in unnecessary danger must be given priority in such cases. All actions should be taken in the context of the extent of the danger and they should not place unreasonable penalties on the employee with regard to earnings or in any other way, unless they are considered necessary to protect the child.

If the Chairperson is of the opinion that an allegation requires immediate action, he/she should call a meeting of the Board of Management to consider the case. The Board of Management will take any further information from the HSE into account at this stage. Sláinte. The Board of Management may, therefore, be obliged to insist that the employee remain absent from school with immediate effect on administrative leave while the matter is being investigated. If the Board of Management does not consider that the allegation requires the employee's absence from school, it should consult with An Garda Síochána, with the HSE Child Protection Officer and the Board of Management's legal advisors.

Permission for Administrative Leave:

If the Board of Management decides that the employee must remain absent from work with immediate effect, this absence will be treated as administrative leave with pay and not as suspension. Such administrative leave will not be regarded as inferring that the employee is guilty in any way. If administrative leave is permitted, the DES must be immediately informed.

The Board of Management:

The Chairperson must report the details of the case to the Board of Management and remind the members of their responsibilities regarding confidentiality of all matters

relating to the case. The Board of Management must adhere to the principles of the legal process and of natural justice

Success Criteria

- The Child Protection Policy is published on the school's website and a summary of the policy displayed in the foyer opposite the main entrance.
- All members of the school community are aware of the contents of the policy - pupils, parents, guardians, teachers and ancillary staff, employees and visitors to the school.
- Procedures as described in the policy are followed in every case of allegations of child abuse
- Feedback from parents /guardians confirming that they trust the school's approach to child welfare

Implementation of the policy

(a) Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of the following personnel are specified in the policy: principal, deputy principal, assistant principal, class teachers, Chairperson and members of the Board of Management.

(b) Time -frame for implementation

The policy will be implemented on 31/8/2010.

Review

The policy will be reviewed after a period of one year or earlier if the need arises.

Ratification and communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Chearbhaill Uí Dhálaigh on an --/--/2010.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Cathaoirleach an Bhord Bhainistíochta.

Communicated to the education partners on --/--/2010.

