

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

The Board of Management of Scoil Molaise has adopted the Department of Education and Science guidelines and procedures for schools in relation to Child Protection and Welfare. This policy is an outline of how the school proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all children attending the school.

Scoil Molaise seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. The school strives to create a happy, safe environment for the children where they feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, these will be listened to with understanding and respect and they will be acted upon.

Aims

- To raise awareness of child abuse, whether emotional, physical or sexual and neglect, among all school staff (including teachers, secretary, caretaker etc.)
- 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 in light of the Child Protection Guidelines.
- To identify curricular content and resources that contributes to the prevention of child abuse and to enable children to properly deal with abuse if it occurs.

Guidelines/Contents

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 - c. Role of the D.L.P.
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1.0 Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person

- A The Board of Management has appointed the Principal as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), to have specific responsibility for child protection.
- B the Deputy Principal has been appointed Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP if he is unavailable for whatever reason.

2.0 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.
- Each staff member has a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.

2.1 Role of the Board of Management

1. To arrange for the planning, development and implementation of an effective child protection programme.
2. To monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.
3. To provide appropriate staff development and training.

Specifically they will:

4. Appoint a DLP and a Deputy DLP.
5. Have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse (see BOM procedures in A and B below.)
6. Monitor the progress of children at risk
7. Ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse.
8. Investigate and respond to any allegation of child abuse against school employees which have been reported to the Health Board of Gardaí.
9. 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:

A. Reporting

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

- i. The DLP will immediately inform the chairperson.
- ii. The DLP will seek a written statement of the allegations 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 must inform the Chairperson. He 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 Gardaí on an individual basis. The provisions of the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act (1998), apply, once the report is made reasonably and in good faith.

- The employee should also be allowed to present their case and may also be accompanied
- vi. The BOM must deal with the matter sensitively and the employee must be fairly treated.
 - vii. 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.
 - viii. 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 the 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 members (including Teachers, Secretary, Caretaker)

It is the responsibility of all teachers and staff members to familiarise themselves with the 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:

1A) Where a child disclosed 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 re-act
- Confidentiality should not be assured – explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately noting:
 - a) What, where, when and who?
 - b) Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries
 - c) Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate
 - d) Retain the record securely

- B) The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant fact. 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 abused is the DLP then the suspicion and any records will be passed to the chairperson who will proceed as per guidelines.

3. Suspicions of abuse

- A) Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to Children First National Guidelines for the Protection 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
- 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 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.
- C) The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. He 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. He will keep records of these consultations
- 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

Guidelines for the DLP in handling reported concerns and disclosures.

- 1) Where the 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 should make informal contact with the assigned (on duty) Social Worker. The DLP 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.
- 2) A report will then be made to the Health Board by the DLP, in person, by telephone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non – availability of Health Board staff, the report should be made to the Gardaí. 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).

- 3) A standard reporting form is completed by the DLP as comprehensively as possible (see Appendix 1).
- 4) 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.
- 5) When the allegation is against the DLP, the chairperson then assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board and filling in the standard reporting form.
- 6) Where there are allegations or suspicions of peer abuse the DLP will follow the same procedures.
 - a. Parents of all parties will be notified and the DLP will inform the chairperson.
 - b. Principal and class teachers will make arrangements to meet separately with all parents to resolve the matter.
 - c. The school will make arrangements to minimise the possibility of the abusive behaviour recurring.

3.0 Child Protection Meetings (case conferences)

1. 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 and ascertain who else will be present.
2. The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference (see Appendix3)
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with the 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.
6. Teachers attending a child protection meeting/case conference should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined on pgs. 149 – 155 of Children First-National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999).

4.0 Organisational Implications

School procedures already in place and new procedures being put in place will be examined with reference to the Children First Guidelines and any child protection issues that may arise will be addressed. The following policies have been addressed in this review:

Supervision	Accidents
Record Keeping	Bullying
Swimming	Children travelling in teachers' cars
Induction of new staff	Induction of pupils
Attendance	

Supervision

School supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks (see rota on staff notice board)

Accidents

While every precaution will be taken under the Health & Safety Statement to ensure the safety of our children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our Incident Book and will be addressed under the accident policy as part of Health & Safety.

Swimming

Children will be brought by bus to the swimming pool. Children will line up in an orderly manner for the bus. Parents may assist with the supervision in the changing rooms in order to ensure the children's safety. This will be organised in co-operation with the Parents Council. 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 accident occurs which is considered to be of a sexual nature the DLP will be notified and he 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 the classrooms, toilets or sheds where they would not be under adult supervision. They will not leave the school yard or engage with adults who are outside of the school yard.

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.

Bullying

Bullying behaviour is addressed under our Anti-Bullying policy. If the behaviour involved is of a sexual nature or regarded as being particularly abusive, then the matter will be referred to the DLP.

Children travelling in staff cars.

Teachers will not carry children alone in their cars at any time.

Record Keeping

Teachers will keep each child's file updated with results or assessments carried out, dates and details of meetings with parents and notes from parents. The records are kept in the children's individual files in a locked filing cabinet. Roll books will be updated daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need to know basis. All education files of pupils who no longer attend the school are kept in the filing cabinet for 5 years.

Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff

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

Induction of Pupils

All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE, Bi Folláin and SPHE.

Communication

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE, Oral English, RSE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom open. "Circle Time" is used in the school from time to time to enhance / improve pupil/teacher and pupil/pupil communication. Policy on the use of mobile phones is dealt with in the Code of Discipline.

Attendance

School attendance will be monitored. With regards to child protection we particular attention will be paid to trends in non-attending. Absences will be monitored in conjunction with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

5.0 Curriculum Implications

All children in the school are cherished equally and in fulfilling the general aims of the Revised Primary Curriculum the school will:

- Enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential
- Enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society.
- Prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

In endeavouring to realise these aims the school will endeavour to create a positive 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 used to create this environment are detailed in the SPHE Plan and will involve:

- Creating a health-promoting physical environment

- Enhancing self-esteem
- Fostering respect for diversity
- Building effective communication within the school
- Catering for individual needs
- Developing democratic process
- Fostering inclusive and respectful language

Every effort will be made to ensure that the school will be physically and emotionally safe and will deliver the curricular content of the SPHE programme with a view to giving the children the protective skills of self-esteem and assertiveness. Co-operative interpersonal skills will be developed through working in pairs and working in groups. Older children will be encouraged to work positively with conflict, negotiation and consensus building skills being developed.

Junior and Senior Infants

- 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

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

The SPHE programme will be supported using the Walk Tall, Alive-O and Stay Safe resources in all the classes. The Bí Folláin Programme will also be used to further support the SPHE programme.

1st & 2nd Class

The implementation of the SPHE programme as laid out under the 10 strand units named above will enable the children to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes pertaining to self-esteem, respect for others and the environment, and skills pertaining to self-care and disclosure. Healthy eating, positive attitudes to drug use and anti-bullying awareness will be introduced. The SPHE programme will be supported using the Walk Tall, Alive –O and Stay Safe programme.

3rd & 4th Class

The SPHE programme will be implemented according to the 10 strand units. Knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in previous classes will be further developed. Children will be enabled to develop intra-personal skills and inter-personal skills. They will be encouraged to develop self-protection skills pertaining to smoking and alcohol. Peer pressure and the influence of the media will also be examined. The development of self-esteem, respect for others assertiveness, awareness of feelings, and skills around self-protection and disclosure will underpin

teaching. The SPHE programme will be supported by the use of Walk Tall resources RSE and Stay Safe programme.

5th & 6th Classes

The SPHE programme will be implemented according to the curricular objectives as laid out under the 10 strands above. Skills, knowledge and attitudes developed in earlier classes will be further enhanced. Children will continue to develop self-awareness and positive attitudes to themselves, others, their environment and 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 of drugs and positive attitudes to drug use will be further developed. Children will be enabled to develop good group building skills. Self-protection will be emphasised and protection of younger less able people will be encouraged. Positive attitudes to sexuality will be developed and respect for self and others fostered. The SPHE programme will be supported by the use of the Walk Tall, RSE or Stay Safe resources.

Success Criteria

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

- Participation by all staff in training
- Delivery of the SPHE curriculum
- Use of the resources to support the delivery of SPHE
- Feedback from all staff

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 The Children First Guidelines will be given to those who require them. A copy of Chapters 3 & 4 and Appendix 1 will be held on a permanent basis in the School Incident Book. A review will be conducted based on the criteria above, following any and all incidents when the guidelines are used.

Responsibility for Review

- DLP
- Principal
- All staff

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the BOM on _____

Signed: _____
Chairman

Parents will be notified of its existence and invited to comment on this policy.