

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The school aims to provide its pupils with the highest standards of care and protection, in order to promote each child's well-being and safeguard him/her from harm while in the school. The Board of Management of Saint Conaire's has adopted the "Children First" Guidelines of the Department of Health & Children 1999 and the "Child Protection" Procedures of the Department of Education & Science 2011. The school staff have also been informed about the relevant circulars 22/2010 and 63/2010. Training has been provided to all staff during the 2011-2012 school year.

Note: This policy is reviewed annually.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The Principal will act as DLP. Should circumstances warrant it, the Deputy Principal shall act as 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.

Designated Liaison Person Mr. Peter Walsh
Deputy Designated Liaison Person Mrs. Sheelagh Garrahy

Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse

All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse.

These are: -

- Considering the possibility
- Looking out for signs of abuse
- Recording of information

Handling Disclosures from Children

When information is offered in confidence the member of staff will need to act with sensitivity in responding to 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 welfare of the child is regarded as the first and paramount consideration. In so far as is practicable, due consideration will be given, having regard to age and understanding, the wishes of the child.

The following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse.

- Remain calm.
- Listen to the child with sensitivity and openness.
- Take all disclosures seriously
- 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
- Explain that further help may have to be sought.
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record of dates, times, names, locations, context and factual details of conversation.

This information should then be passed onto the DLP and a record will be retained in the school.

If the reporting person or member of the school staff and the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures for reporting as laid out in 'Children First' – Section 4.4 pg 38 (Appendix 10) will be adhered to.

The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed before the DLP makes contact with the relevant authorities unless the situation demands that more immediate action to be taken for the safety of the child in which case the Chairman may be informed after the report has been submitted.

Any Professional who suspects child abuse should inform parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and a duty social worker is unavailable, an Garda Síochána should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Health Board intervention.

Allegations Against School Employees

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management or the DLP is the safety and protection of the child. However, employees also have a right to protection against claims which are false or malicious.

As employers, the Board of Management should always seek legal advice as the circumstances can vary from one case to another.

There are two procedures to be followed:

- i. The reporting Procedure
- ii. The Procedure for dealing with the Employee.

The DLP has responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board. The Chairperson, Board of Management has responsibility, acting in consultation with his/her Board, for addressing the employment issues. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

Reporting

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should immediately act in accordance with the procedures outlined in "Child Protection."

A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report.

The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management

School employees, other than the DLP who receive allegations against another school employee, should immediately report the matter to the DLP. School employees who form suspicions regarding conduct of another school employee should consult with the DLP. The procedures outlined in will then be followed.

The chairperson of the Board and DLP should make the employee aware privately

- a) That an allegation has been made against him/her
- b) The nature of the allegation
- c) Whether or not the Health Board or Gardaí has been/will be/must be/should be informed.

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. The employee should be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, Health Board, and legal advisers.

The priority in all cases is that no child be exposed to unnecessary risk. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, the Chairperson should take any necessary protective measures. These measure should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee in any way unless to protect the child.

If the nature of the allegations warrants immediate action in the Chairperson's opinion, the Board of Management should be convened to consider the matter. The Board will consider feedback if any has been received from the Health Board, Gardaí or relevant source. This may result in the Board of Management directing that the employee absent him/herself from the school forthwith while the matter is being investigated (Administrative Leave). When the Board of Management is unsure as to whether this should occur, advice should be sought from the Gardaí and/or the Child Care Manager of the Health Board and the legal advisers to the Board of Management.

Administrative Leave

Should the Board of Management direct that the employee absent him/herself as above, such absence of the employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not suspension and would not imply any degree of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed

Board of Management

The Chairperson should inform the Board of Management of all the details and remind the members of their serious responsibility to maintain strict confidentiality on all matters relating to the issue and the principles of due process and natural justice.

Pupils being removed from school during the school day

Parents/Guardians will be required to sign pupils out and sign them back when they remove children from school during the day. A sign out/sign in book will be maintained in the school office. The sign out book will be put into position with effect from March 3, 2013. Parents will be notified of this requirement at the start of each term.

Ratified by Board of Management

Date: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

St. Conaire's N.S. Child Protection Guidelines

Designated Liaison Person (DLP): Mr. Peter Walsh

Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP): Mrs. Sheelagh Garrahy

If a child discloses information to you:

Listen

Do not ask leading questions

Offer reassurance but do not promise not to tell

Explain that other adults may need to be told – DLP or DDLP

Do not stop the child speaking

Do not over react or comment

Inform DLP/DDLP – If you have reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern that a child is at risk or has suffered abuse, the DLP/DDLP will contact the Health Board for advice.

At the earliest opportunity, record accurately what the child has said by using the child's own words. Record date, time and context of the disclosure. Use the child's registration number, never the name.

Facts only.

Sketch signs of physical injury if appropriate.

Retain records confidentially in school and beyond the child's completion date.

The following should also be reported to the DLP or Deputy DLP

An account from a person who saw a child being abused

Injury consistent with abuse

Implausible explanations for injury or behaviour

Consistent evidence over a period of time that a child is being emotionally or physically neglected

Health Service Executive Response

School is asked to monitor a situation

Formal report is requested, sent by DLP/DDLP and on receipt case is allocated to a social worker

Preliminary enquiry and a screening process

Initial assessment

Possible Outcomes

Case closed;

Family support;

Child Protection Plan will be put in place

October 2013 update