

Child Protection Policy

This document takes account of the provisions of each of the following important pieces of legislation:

- Freedom of Information Act 1997
- The Education Act 1998
- The Child Welfare Act 2000
- Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.

The new procedures are based on the recently published “Children First – national Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011”.

The School recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in each school policy, school practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with requirements of the Department of Education and Skills, Child Protection Procedures for the Primary and Post primary Schools, the Primary School Council and the School Council have approved this Child Protection Policy.

The following key personnel have been identified and ratified by the School:

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is the headmistress, Ms Bleuenn Morvan.

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is the teacher Ms Blandine Farrugia

In its policies, practices and activities, the LFI will adhere to the following principles of best practice in Child Protection and Welfare. Our school recognises that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations and will therefore

- Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect
- Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters
- Adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability

Specific policies named hereunder are key elements of this overall document and must be referred to in the context of this policy:

- Attendance
- Enrolment
- Code of Behaviour
- Bullying
- Health and Safety
- Record Keeping
- ICT
- Supervision
- Special Education
- Induction of Staff

- Tours/Trips
- Critical incidents

This policy will also be considered with reference to the participation by pupils in sporting activities, other extra-curricular activities and school outings. Other practices and activities, where child protection might have particular relevance, will consider the procedures outlined within this policy. The School has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

The policy is available to all school personnel and the Parents Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. It is also available in hard copy in each classroom.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

In the LFI Primary School, the headmistress Ms Morvan is the DLP and Ms Farrugia is the Deputy DLP. They will both undertake training from the Child Abuse Prevention Programme at the earliest opportunity. CAPP provides training to the whole school community (staff, parents and Board of Management) on the Stay Safe Programme.

The DLP has specific responsibility for Child Protection Procedures and will represent the school in all correspondence with Health Boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to child abuse concerns should be processed through the DLP.

The DLP acts appropriately where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or where an allegation has been made.

Confidentiality

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child. The giving of information to those who need to have that information is not a breach of confidentiality. This procedure exists for the protection of a child who may have been or has been abused. 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 the 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. A child should not be left in a dangerous situation where Health Board intervention is not forthcoming.

Protection for persons reporting child abuse

The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports a child protection concern 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of an Garda Síochána.

Qualified privilege

People making a report to the DLP in good faith have 'qualified privilege' under common law. Reports made to Health Boards may be subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act,

1997. This act enables members of the public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence.

Definition and recognition of child abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

Guidelines for recognition of child abuse

A list of child neglect indicators is contained in Chapter 2:2 of 'Children First'. This policy draws particular attention to "persistent evidence" of neglect, including indicators such as no lunch, lack of uniform, no homework, poor attendance, persistent health problems, lack of sleep indicating inappropriate television in the home. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

There are commonly 3 stages in the identification of child abuse:

1. Considering the possibility
2. Looking out for signs of abuse
3. Recording of information

Each of these stages is developed in 'Children First' (2:2)

Handling disclosures from children

Staffs are advised to deal with each situation sensitively, reassure the child but not to make promises that cannot be fulfilled.

The adult should not ask leading questions or make suggestions. They should explain that further help may have to be sought. The discussion should then be recorded accurately.

The record should include reference to what was observed with sketches of physical injury where necessary. It should also record when the alleged incident took place. Records should be kept in a secure place. The information should then be conveyed to the school DLP.

If the reporting person and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures outlined in 'Children First' must be adhered to. Standardised reporting forms should be used (DES Procedures Appendix 4°. The content of the report should follow the guidelines in 'Children First'.

Allegations or Suspicions in relation to school employees (DES Procedures chapter 5)

The DLP is concerned with the protection of the children in their care in the first instance. However, employees must be protected against false and malicious claims. Due process must be observed in relation to allegations against employees. Legal Advice should be sought by the School in relation to allegations in relation to an employee. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Principal of the school 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 act in accordance with the procedures outlined in 'Children First'. A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. A parent/guardian may make a statement on behalf of a child. The DLP is responsible for liaising with the HSE and the employees.

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 employee should be informed by the School that:

- a. 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 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 School within a specified period and informed that this may be passed to the Gardaí, Health Board and legal advisers.

The School may direct that the employee take administrative leave with pay and avoid suspension, thus removing any implication of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed.

School measures to protect the children in our care

There are a number of areas where common sense in our school prevail in order to protect the children in the school and the staff who care for them. In relation to this, certain points should be noted:

1. The LFI shall fully implement the Stay Safe programme
2. A copy of the school's child protection policy, which includes the names of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP, will be made available to all school personnel and the Parents Association and be readily accessible to parents on request.
3. The name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school
4. In addition to informing the school authority of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. The DLP shall keep records of such cases and report them to the Proviseur.

5. The School should undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and its implementation by the school. A checklist to be used in undertaking the review is included in Appendix 1. The school has put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement that might be identified in the annual review. The DLP shall make arrangements to inform school personnel that the review has been undertaken. Written notification that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the Parents Association. A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the DES.
- Staff should make every effort not to be alone in a classroom with one child or detain a child on their own after school. In the case of special needs pupils where resource hours and assistance are sanctioned on an individual basis, it is school policy that staff in such a situation should work with the classroom door open, thus rendering the occupants visible at all times.
 - When possible children should work in groups.
 - Children with physical disabilities who may require assistance in toileting will be aided by a Special Needs Assistant who has met the necessary screening requirements when being employed by the school.

It should be noted that children with disabilities may be more at risk of abuse due to a number of reasons (DES Procedures 2:3). Parents, teachers and all staff involved in services for children with disabilities need to be familiar with the indicators of abuse and be alert for signs of abuse.