

St Finian's Primary School

Child Protection Policy

1 Background

1.1 This policy takes into account the ethos of St Finian's Primary School, the rights of children under the Children (N I) Order 1995 and the guidance contained in the DENI publication 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection'.

The central thrust of the documents referred to above is that the welfare of the child must be of paramount importance and that schools have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in their charge. Schools should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the children's welfare is safe guarded and their safety is preserved.

1.2 Concern for the welfare of children is a basic part of the school's pastoral responsibility. Therefore, the staff of the school will:

- take steps to ensure that the children in their care are protected from harm
- be alert for signs of abuse or neglect
- report to Social Services or the police instances or suspicions of abuse or neglect happening inside or outside school

1.3 to create an environment in which the safety and care of pupils are promoted, St Finian's Primary School will take the following steps:

- endeavour to maintain a strong pastoral ethos
- ensure that new employees, both full time and part time, volunteer helpers etc. are subject to standard vetting procedures
- provide a secure framework and clear procedures in relation to child protection
- give guidance to staff in the exercise of their professional responsibilities through a Code of Conduct
- use opportunities within the curriculum and through liaison with appropriate outside agencies to address related issues

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Ultimate responsibility for ensuring that appropriate child protection measures and procedures are in place lies with the **Board of Governors**

2.2 Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher

Each school has a teacher designated with the responsibility for Child Protection matters. In St Finian's Primary School the **Designated Teacher is Miss McMullan** and the **Deputy Designated Teacher is Mrs McGrattan**. Should either of these be unavailable, **Mr O'Prey** will act in their place. The Designated Teachers are responsible for:

- receiving concerns and reports from staff on possible or actual instances of child abuse
- collating details of such reports or concerns
- informing the principal
- reviewing Child Protection Policy and procedures annually
- disseminating information
- liaising with outside agencies

2.3 Principal

In the event of an allegation or suspicion of child abuse, the Principal will:

- consider the report received from the other Designated Teachers
- ensure that appropriate procedures are implemented including the immediate safeguarding of the child at risk
- decide on the need for a referral, either informal or formal to Social Services, to the Designated Officer of CCMS and to other agencies as appropriate
- inform the parents as and when appropriate

the Principal will also have responsibility for :

- initiating the vetting procedures for new staff, volunteers and helpers etc.
- responding to issues under the School's Complaints Procedure

2.4 Teaching and Non Teaching Staff

All staff have a duty to

- be alert for signs of abuse or neglect
- report concerns to the Designated Teacher (or Deputy) in the first instance
- keep a brief written record of details
- ensure that their professional conduct is prudent and leaves no grounds for misinterpretation in relation to child protection (please refer to the Code of Conduct)

3 Code of Conduct for Staff

3.1 St Finian's Primary School must safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils in its charge. This duty rests with all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, and implicit in it, is the assumption that the conduct of school staff towards their pupils must be above reproach. The younger the pupil, the less likely that he or she will be able to recognise and respond appropriately to an abuse of trust by any

member of staff. Any abuse of that position of trust by any member of staff must be regarded with the utmost gravity.

3.2 As well as the more obvious forms of physical or sexual abuse, members of staff should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse, such as:

persistent sarcasm
verbal bullying or
severe and persistent negative comment or actions.

Members of staff should reflect on every aspect of their contact with children that may give rise to perceptions or allegations of this form of abuse

4 Physical Contact with Pupils

4.1 Integral to a clear understanding of standards of behaviour expected of school staff is an understanding of the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with pupils. It is unrealistic to suggest that teachers should touch pupils only in emergencies. Particularly with younger pupils, touching them is inevitable and can give welcome reassurance to the child. However, teachers must bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued. Children may find being touched uncomfortable or distressing for a variety of reasons. It is important for teachers to be sensitive to a child's reaction to physical contact and to act appropriately.

4.2 In extreme cases, which while rare do occur, a teacher might have to restrain a pupil physically to prevent him or her causing injury to him or herself, to others or to property. In such instances, no more than the minimum necessary force should be used.

5 Responding to a Concern and Handling Information

5.1 In talking to a child who has disclosed information or who is a victim of abuse a member of staff should bear the following in mind:

- listen and accept information calmly. Avoid any response that might compound a child's feeling of guilt
- Do not interrogate. Social Services and the police are those charged with the responsibility of interviewing at length
- Only ask questions for purposes of clarification. Avoid leading questions that may put an emphasis on your perception of what might have happened. Check your understanding with the child of what has happened
- Affirm the child's feelings. Respond positively to the disclosure i.e. avoid attributing blame or criticising anyone
- Refer any information however trivial it might seem to **Ms McMullan or Mrs McGrattan.**
- Do not give a guarantee that you will keep what is said confidential or secret. If you are told about abuse or neglect you have a duty to report. The best that can be promised is that you will only tell those who have an absolute right to know

- Write brief notes if feasible. (Original notes written at the time are more important than an improved version written later.) Use the vocabulary used by the child. Record any mention of date, time, place, persons etc. as well as any sign of injury
- Any such information is confidential between you, the child and the teacher to whom it is referred, who will then pass it on to the necessary authorities

Five things to say to a child in such a situation

- I believe you
- I am glad you came to see me
- I am sorry this has happened to you
- It is not (nor never was) your fault
- We are going to do something together to get some help. NEVER promise absolute confidentiality

6 Procedures

- 6.1 The Procedure to be followed when a school has concerns or has received a report about possible abuse or neglect **by anyone other than a member of the school staff** is set out in the diagram entitled ‘Procedure for Reporting an Incident of Child Abuse in Catholic Maintained Schools’ which is on display in the school.
- 6.2 Parents wishing to register their concerns about their child’s welfare in school should take one of the following courses of action. The course chosen will depend upon the severity of the complaint. A parent may:
- speak/write to a child’s teacher
 - speak /write to the Principal
- 6.3 When a complaint is made about possible abuse or neglect by a member of school staff the following procedure should be followed:
- 1 Person making or receiving details of complaints should refer it directly to the Principal
 - 2 The Principal will seek clarification if needed
 - 3 Principal will initiate the record of complaint
 - 4 The Principal will consult with the CCMS Designated Officer
 - 5 The Principal will consult with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors
 - 6 The Principal will consider the evidence and the advice received
 - 7 In consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, the Principal will decide that the evidence is such that
 - A the accusation is unsubstantiated and there is no case to answer

OR

 - B An immediate referral to Social Services or police is required
- OR
- C Action should be taken under the Disciplinary Procedures

Should no further action be required the Principal should:

- advise member of staff concerned of the nature of the complaint (if not already done) and also of the outcome
- advise CCMS Designated Officer of the outcome
- advise the complainant of the action taken and the outcome
- consider if support e.g. counselling is required
- record a brief record of the complaint in the CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT LOG including reasons for the outcome along with copies of any contemporaneous notes etc

7 Monitoring and Evaluating

St Finian's P S will carry out an evaluation of its Child Protection procedures at regular intervals to enable us to improve further the quality of provision for the benefit of all pupils and teachers.