



Child Protection Policy

Introductory statement

The management of Maynooth Educate Together N.S. have developed and agreed this policy in line with current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines i.e. Children First Guidelines as issued by the Department of Health and Children and the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures issued by the Department of Education and Science.

It is incumbent of all staff to familiarise themselves with these two documents.

School philosophy and ethos

Children enrolled in Maynooth Educate Together N.S. will be supported in reaching their full potential: mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially. This support will be differentiated in an atmosphere and environment in which children feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm.

Our school operates under the direct patronage of Educate Together. The four underlying principals of our ethos are:

- Co-educational
- Child-centered
- Multi-denominational
- Democratically run

Aims of the policy

This policy aims to ensure and support:

- safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment;
- provision of a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school;
- development of awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community;
- existence and application of procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff;
- that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the Children First and the DES Guidelines and Procedures in relation to reporting concerns and /or disclosures of child abuse;
- provision of on-going training in this and related areas for all school staff.

Definitions

Child abuse can be categorised into five different types: emotional abuse, physical abuse, neglect, verbal abuse and sexual abuse.

Emotional Abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met.

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning.

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. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific moment.

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Verbal Abuse is the use of words to cause harm to the child being spoken to. Verbal abuse may consist of shouting, insulting, intimidating, threatening, shaming, demeaning or derogatory language directed at a child. Verbal abuse by any adult towards a child/children in Maynooth Educate Together N.S is unacceptable behaviour.

Designated Liaison Person: The Board of Management has appointed Elaine Phelan as Designated Liaison Person [DLP] and Marie Hand as Deputy DLP. The role of the DLP is to liaise with all relevant agencies, whether in seeking advice, reporting or in follow up consultations.

Prevention

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the schools SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection. The formal lessons will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

Principles and Procedures

Dealing with a disclosure/suspicion from a third party

Teachers who suspect child abuse should report their concerns to the DLP at the first instance and carefully record their observations over a period of time.

Disclosures of child abuse from a third party will be reported to the DLP. If a third party starts to tell a teacher about an alleged child abuse incident the teacher will ask them to speak to the DLP. If the person does not inform the DLP the teacher will do so.

Where a child discloses 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.

- 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-react

- Confidentiality should be assured. Explain that further help may have to be sought.
- Record the discussion accurately noting
 - What, where and when;
 - Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries;
 - Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate;
 - Sign and date the record;
 - Retain the record securely.

Whether cases of abuse are suspected or confirmed, confidentiality will be respected. The information on individual cases will be restricted to the teachers immediately involved with the child and will be on a need to know basis.

The DLP will record the incident. It is not the function of the teacher or the DLP to investigate the issue.

If the suspected abuser is the DLP, then the suspicion and any records will be passed on to the Chairperson, who will proceed as per guidelines.

The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed of the disclosure.

Informal contact with the designated person in the Health Board will be made, seeking advice as to whether a referral should be made. The DLP will be explicit that s/he is requesting advice and not making a report. It is not necessary at this stage for the DLP to disclose his/her name or the name of the school.

The advice given by the Health Board must be acted upon.

If the advice is not to refer, the DLP will record this advice as the reason for non-referral. The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed.

If the advice from the Health Board is to refer the case, the DLP will do so. However, prior to referring, the DLP will inform the parent of her intention to refer, unless this course of action is injurious to the child.

Following referral and the completion of the standard form, the school will have no further part to play in the investigation.

If a case conference is required, the DLP will be invited to attend.

All records will be held in a central securely locked location.

In the event of an emergency or non-availability of HSE staff, a report should be made directly to the Gardai.

Allegations against an employee

Procedures followed are similar to those of a disclosure.

- Employee is made aware of the allegation against him/her
- Employee will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing and at a meeting of the Board of Management
- BOM meeting to review the allegation, giving due consideration to any advice given by Health Board/Gardai.

- The BOM will consider placing the employee on administrative leave, with full pay, pending the outcome of investigations by the Health Board/Gardai.
- On conclusion of any investigation the BOM will determine the employment status of the employee.

Organisational implications

Supervision

School supervision policy and routines will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks and at assembly and dispersal times. Children will not leave the school yard or engage with adults outside of the school yard.

Behaviour

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively, and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Positive behaviour policy. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

Visitors

Teachers on yard duty will be aware of visitors entering the school yard and will ascertain their intentions. Visitors will be supervised in the discharge of their business. All school entrance/exit doors are locked after the children enter the school. Visitors cannot enter the school without using the bell and giving a reason for entry.

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school (principal/teachers) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate.

Toilets

It is school policy that only one child is permitted to enter the toilet at any one time. Children who need to use the toilet during yard time must seek the permission of the teacher on the yard. During yard time the toilet closest to the exit door will be used. A playground helper or SNA will supervise the visit to the toilet.

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has a toileting accident they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change. If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents/guardians cannot be contacted, the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In all such situations two members of staff should be present.

A record of all such incidents will be kept and principal and parents will be notified.

Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs

If any child in our school requires intimate care the procedures involved with such care will be agreed in consultation with the pupil, their parents/guardians and other personnel involved in the care of the pupil. This is in keeping with best practice, keeps the best interests of the child to the fore and maintains the child's dignity. Such procedures, when agreed, will be communicated to all parties involved and recorded.

Attendance

We will monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

Children travelling in staff cars

In rare instances where a staff car must be used to transport a child, children will never be taken alone.

School trips/tours

School staff accompanying children on school trips/tours (including after school sporting events) will deliver a duty of care commensurate with the trip/tour. The higher the risk factor the higher the number of teachers/responsible adults involved. All transportation hired/provided must provide safe transportation and a functioning seatbelt for every child/adult.

One to one teaching

Parents will be made aware when one to one teaching is in the best interests of the child. Written consent is required for all one to one teaching. Where possible, children in Learning Support/Resource will be taught in small groups. The door to the room will be left open if a teacher is alone with a child. No member of school staff will ever be alone with a child where a room door is closed.

Internet use

Parental consent will be sought for general use of children's photographs on displays. Children's family names and details will not be used on displays. Separate parental consent will be sought to name individual children. Otherwise we refer to classes e.g. 'Junior Infants'. The school will ensure that broadband usage is filtered by NCTE.

Induction of teachers and ancillary staff

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES 2001 and Children First Guidelines 1999. The DLP will give a copy of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, Chapters 3 & 4 and Appendix 1 of the Children First and this Child Protection Policy to new staff. All new teachers will be expected to teach the designated SPHE objectives for their class.

Curricular implications

The Stay Safe Programme will be taught in Senior Infants, First Class, Third Class and Fifth Class.

The SPHE programme and the RSE programme will be supported by the Walk Tall programme and the RSE Programme.

Our Learn Together Programme will also enhance the children's learning regarding Personal Safety.

Implementation

These procedures will be implemented following ratification by the Board of Management.

Plan for reviewing the policy

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated regularly and any training needs arising from implementing the policy will be addressed.

Approved by the Board of Management:

23rd February 2010

Date, signature