



# Shanballymore National School

## Child Protection Policy

### **Introductory Statement**

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities. In accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Shanballymore National School has agreed the following child protection policy:

### **Definition of Child Abuse:**

Child Abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and 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. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific moment. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child is being neglected.

**Emotional Abuse:** occurs when a child's need 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. A child may be affected by an event in his/her life and staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child's emotional needs are being neglected.

**Physical Abuse:** is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child may have been physically abused.

**Sexual Abuse:** occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child may have been sexually abused.

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.

2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr John Walsh

3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Mrs Siobhan Shinnick

4. In its policies, practices and activities Shanballymore NS will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The school will:

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- 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; and
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters. This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:

1. Prevention – curriculum provision

2. Procedures – procedures for dealing with concerns/disclosures

3. Practice – best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff. It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

**Aims:**

This policy aims to:

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment
- Provide personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff
- Ensure 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

- Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff

**Prevention:**

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used in this school 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 of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

**Procedures:**

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking, etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools.

**Practice:**

The following areas have been considered by the staff and the Board of Management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the staff and the Board of Management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

**1. Physical contact**

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult. While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining its appropriateness:-

- It is acceptable to the child
- It is open and not secretive
- The age and developmental stage of the child
- School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

**1. Visitors/Guest Speakers**

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.

**1. Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs**

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant(s), principal and if appropriate the pupil. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs. The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when particular staff involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.

It is preferable that two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care needs but this may not be always possible. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

### 1. **Toileting accidents**

Parents will be contacted in the event of all such accidents. Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if the parent is unreachable the child may be offered fresh clothing to change into.

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 the Principal and parents will be notified.

### 1. **One-to One Teaching**

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment.

Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought in writing.

### 1. **Changing for Games/PE/Swimming**

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/PE/swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal areas and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child.

### **Basis for Reporting to a Health Board**

A health board should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. With regard to emotional abuse and/or physical neglect, consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional neglect or physical neglect would constitute reasonable grounds for concern.

### **Procedures in dealing with a disclosure/suspicion from a child/third party:**

- Teachers who suspect child abuse/neglect 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/neglect 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/neglect to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively. It must always be remembered that school personnel have a supportive role; to listen and record information, not an investigative role. Great care must be taken not to abuse the child's trust. This should not be a formal interview.
  - 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
- The child should understand that it is not possible that any information will be kept a secret - explain that further help may have to be sought.
- Record the disclosure immediately and accurately using, as far as possible, the child's own words

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

- Whether cases of abuse/neglect are suspected or confirmed, confidentiality will be respected. The information on individual cases will be restricted to the teacher(s) 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 Managements will be informed of the disclosure.
- Informal contact with the designated person in the Western 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 OLP 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 OLP 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.

### **Allegations against an employee:**

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

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

### **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.

### **Links to other policy/planning areas**

**Prevention:** SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection', The School Code of Discipline

**Procedures:** Anti-Bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Policy. Supervision of Pupils Policy. Health and Safety Statement. Swimming Policy. School Tours/Outings Policy.

The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are being put in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date:

Date of Next Review: