



Scoil Naisúnta an tSailéain Sylane National School

Sylane N.S. Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management, staff and representative of parents of the school drafted the following policy:

Rationale

The B.O.M. of Sylane National School has adopted the Department of Education and Science guidelines and procedures for schools in relation to child protection and welfare. This policy is an outline of how Sylane National School proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all children attending our school.

Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the School.

Sylane National School seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults capable of realising their full potential as human beings. We strive to create a happy, safe environment for the children where they feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect and their concerns will be attended to.

Aims

1. To raise awareness of Child Abuse, namely emotional, physical, sexual and neglect among all the educational partners in our school.
2. To put in place clear procedures for all school personnel dealing with suspicion and allegations of Child Abuse.
3. To identify curriculum content and resources that, contribute to the prevention of Child Abuse and to enable children to deal with Abuse if it occurs.

The guidelines are laid out as follows:

1. Appointment of designated liaison person (D.L.P)
2. Roles and responsibilities and guidelines
 - 2.1.1. Role of the Board of Management
 - 2.1.2. Role of the staff members
 - 2.1.3. Role of designated liaison person.
3. Case conferences
4. Organisational implications
5. Curriculum implications

1. Appointment of Designated Liaison person

- a) The Board of Management has appointed the Principal, Sinéad Cleary as the D.L.P. to have specific responsibility for child protection.
- b) Clodagh Ruane has been appointed as Deputy Liaison person to take the place of D.L.P. if Ms. Cleary is unavailable.
- c) The position of D.L.P. will be addressed at the first meeting of each new Board of Management. The D.L.P. will continue to act as such until such time as she is replaced by the B.O.M. for any reason.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

- a) The Board of Managements has primary responsibility for the welfare of the pupils.
- b) The D.L.P. has specific responsibility for child protection in school
- c) All staff has a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.

2.1 Role of Board of Management.

- a) To arrange for planning, development and implementation of an effective child protection programme.
- b) To monitor and evaluate its effectiveness
- c) To provide appropriate staff development and training. Specifically they will:
 - i. Appoint a D.L.P. and a deputy D.L.P.
 - ii. Have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse
 - iii. Monitor the progress of children at risk
 - iv. Ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse
 - v. Investigate and respond to allegations of child abuse against one of the school's employees, which have been reported to the Health Board or Gardai
 - vi. To decide on teachers attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and to advise teachers before attending such meetings/procedures.

Procedures for Board of Management in cases of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by school employee.

Reporting:

In the event of receiving a complaint or suspicion re an employee:

The D.L.P. will immediately inform the chairperson

She/he will seek a written statement of the allegation from the person/agency making the allegation. Parents/Guardians may make a statement on behalf of a child.

The D.L.P. will seek advice from the relevant Health Board and will take responsibility for reporting based on this advice.

The D.L.P. following consultation with the Health Board decides that this matter is not for reporting, she/he must inform the Chairperson. They must then inform the person/agency making the allegations of the reason for this decision. If this person/agency still has concerns they are free to consult with or report to the relevant Health Board or Gardai on an individual basis. The provisions of the protection for persons reporting Child abuse act 1998 apply once they report reasonably and in good faith.

If the D.L.P. following consultation with the Health Board decides that this matter is for reporting she/he should inform the Chairperson who should proceed in accordance with the procedures in the Child Protection Guidelines 1996 (page 16)

The D.L.P./deputy D.L.P. completes a standard/reporting form as comprehensively as possible.

When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse she/he will always seek legal advice and base her/his response on this advice.

She/he will privately inform the employee of the fact and nature of the allegation and whether or not it has been reported by the D.L.P. to the Health Board (refer to 4.2-4.3 page 16 of Child Protection Guidelines and procedures DES 2001).

The Chairperson has a duty to afford the employee fairness and due process –she/he is entitled to details and a copy of the written allegation and to advice and representation and an opportunity to report to the Board within one week.

Responding

When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse she/he will always seek legal advice and base his/her response on this advice.

The chairperson will consider whether there is any risk to pupil's safety. If the chairperson considers that there is a risk – she/he may require the employee to take immediate administrative leave. If unsure the Chairperson will consult with the Health Board/Gardai. Tuam Social Worker (093) 26800.

If administrative leave has been involved the chairperson will inform D.E.S. The health board (in some cases the Gardai) may also notify in accordance with legal advice received.

Once it is deemed necessary by the D.L.P. and the Chairperson to make a report (after receiving advice from Health Board) the Chairperson will convene and inform a meeting of the B.O.M. as soon as possible.

Where the alleged abuse has taken place within the school or relates to the abuse of pupils of the school-by-school employees outside of school time, the B.O.M. will investigate the matter. They will convene a further meeting once the relevant information has been gathered. At this meeting the B.O.M. will consider in detail.

The allegations made and their source
The advice given to relevant authorities

The written responses of the employee

At this meeting also

The person and agency who is alleging abuse by the school employee should be offered an opportunity to present his/her case to the B.O.M. and may be accompanied by another person

Parents/guardians may act on behalf of the child

The employee should also be afforded an opportunity to present their case and may also be accompanied.

The B.O.M. must deal with the matter sensitively and the employee must be fairly treated.

The B.O.M. will make a decision on action if any based on their investigation and will inform the employee of this in writing. They will also inform the D.E.S. of the outcome if the employee has been absent on administrative leave.

Where it is not possible for the B.O.M. to conduct an enquiry into the allegations (e.g. where abuse has occurred in past employment or where an employee is undergoing investigation by relevant authorities), the Chairperson will maintain close contact with the Health Board and receive reports and records from them where appropriate.

2.2 Role of staff members (to include Teachers, S.N.A., Caretaker, Secretary etc.)

It is the responsibility of all teachers and staff members to familiarise themselves with the “Child first National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of Children 1999” especially

Chapter 3-definition and recognition of child abuse

Chapter 4-basis for reporting and standard reporting procedures

Appendix 1-signs and symptoms of child abuse.

B/. Guidelines for teachers and staff members in handling

1. Disclosures from children

- aa. 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. The following advice should be offered

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 not be assured – explain that further help may be sought

Record the discussion accurately noting –

What, where and when

Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries

Retain the record securely

- B/. The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate allegations of abuse.
- C/. The D.L.P. should then be informed and given relevant records
- D/. If the suspected abuser is the D.L.P. then the suspicion and any records will be passed on to the Chairperson who will proceed as per guidelines.

2. Suspicions of Abuse

- a) Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to Children first National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of Children 1999 especially.
 - ❖ Chapter 3 definition and recognition of child abuse
 - ❖ Basis for reporting and standard reporting procedures
 - ❖ Appendix 1 signs and symptoms of child abuse.
- b) Staff members should observe and record overtime the dates/signs/symptoms of behaviour causing them concern.
- c) They should inform the D.L.P. and pass on all relevant records
- d) Staff members will note any marks or bruises and will record child's explanation

2.3 Role of Designated Liaison person (D.L.P.)

- a) The D.L.P. acts as liaison with outside agencies, Health Boards, Gardai and other parties, with child protection concern.
- b) The D.L.P. will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Child First Guidelines in the school. She will photocopy and circulate to all staff –chapter 3 and 4 and appendix 1 of these guidelines and advice on good practice.
- c) The D.L.P. will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicious of disclosures of abuse. She will keep records of these consultations.
- d) The D.L.P. will seek advice from the Health Board.
- e) The D.L.P. will report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to the Health or the Gardai based on this advice.
- f) The D.L.P. will maintain proper records in a secure confidential manner and in a secure location.
- g) The D.L.P. will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.

Guidelines for D.L.P. in Handling Reported concerns and disclosures.

- a) Where the D.L.P. or Deputy D.L.P. have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the Health Board, they should seek

appropriate advice. To do this the D.L.P./Deputy should make informal contact with the assigned (on duty) social worker. The D.L.P./Deputy in this case, should be explicit that she is requesting advice and not making a report. If advised to report the matter the D.L.P. will act on that advice.

- b) A report will then be made to the Health Board by the D.L.P./Deputy in person by telephone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of Health Board Staff, the report should be made to the Gardai. The D.L.P. should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the B.O.M. who should then follow the procedures as outlined in chapter 4 (section 4.3) of the Children first National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999.
- c) A standard reporting form is completed by the D.L.P./Deputy as comprehensively as possible (See appendix)
- d) Parents/guardians will normally be informed that a report is being made. It may be decided that informing the parent/carer is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. The decision not to inform the parent/carer should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- e) When the allegation is against the D.L.P., the chairperson then assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board and filling in the standard reporting form.
- f) Where there are allegations or suspicious of peer abuse the D.L.P. will follow the same procedures.
 - ❖ Parents of all parties will be notified and the D.L.P. will inform the chairperson.
 - ❖ Principal and class teachers will make arrangement to meet separately with all parents to resolve the matter.
 - ❖ The school will make arrangements to minimise the possibility of the abusive behaviour recurring.

3.0 Child Protection Meetings (Case Conferences)

- a) A request is made from the Health Board through the D.L.P. who should consult with the Chairperson of the B.O.M. of the school. The Chairperson may seek clarification through the D.L.P. as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present
- b) The school employee may complete a report for the meeting conference (see App 3)
- c) The school employee will be advised if children/parents/guardians are going to be present. The school employee may contact the Chairperson of the Child Protection Meeting for advice.

- d) The school employee may keep a child's behaviour under closer observation, if requested to do so. This may include observing the child's behaviour, peer interactions, school progress or informal conversation.
- e) In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with Health Board Staff, should be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved. Where appropriate and within the normal limits of confidentiality, reporting staff will be kept informed about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation following on from their report.
- f) Teachers attending a child protection meeting/case conference should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined on pages 149-155 of Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999.

4.0 Organisational Implication

Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff.

The D.L.P. will be responsible for informing all new teachers, ancillary staff of the Children's First Guidelines (1999). The D.L.P. will give a copy of chapter 3 & 4, appendix 1 and this child protection policy to all new staff.

5.0 Curriculum Implications.

In Sylane National School we strive to ensure that our school will be physically and emotionally safe and we will deliver the curricular content of our S.P.H.E. programme with a view to giving our children the protective skills of self-esteem and assertiveness. The circle time methodology will be used on a whole school basis. The no-blame approach will be adopted in our Anti-Bullying policy. Co-operative interpersonal skills will be developed through working in pairs and working in groups. Older children will be encouraged to work positively with conflict and negotiation and consensus building skills developed. The S.P.H.E. programme would be supported, using the Walk Talk resources, our Alive –O programme and Stay Safe resources.

Time frame for implementation

These procedures will be implemented following ratification by the B.O.M.

Timeframe for review.

At the first staff meeting of each year the D.L.P. will remind all teachers of the guideline and copies of Chapter 3 & 4 and appendix 1 of the Children First Guidelines will be given to those who require them. A review will be conducted based on the criteria above, following any and all incidents when the guidelines are used.

Responsibility for Review; D.L.P., Principal and all Staff.

Ratification and communication

This policy was ratified on 11th November 2009

Parents will be notified of its existence and invited to look and comment on the policy.