



# *Maree N.S.*

## *Maree, Oranmore, Co. Galway*

### **Child Protection Policy**

The Board of Management of Maree N.S. 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. Accordingly, 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 Maree N.S. has agreed the following child protection policy:

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 Lisa Kilkelly**
3. The **Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) Bróna Smyth**
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Maree N.S. 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.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

5. Here is a list school policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to child protection: the Code of Behaviour/Anti-bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Strategy, Supervision of Pupils, Sporting Activities/School Outings/Pupil Work Placements.

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

6. 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.

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

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on **20 Sept 2017**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal

The following areas have been considered by the staff and board of management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. 'Stay Safe, best practice in Child Protection: Guidance for schools' was consulted in drawing up this practice. Following discussion and consultation the staff and board of management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

a) 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 it's 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.

b) Visitors / Guest Speakers:

Visitors/guest speakers should not 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.

c) 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, 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 the particular staff involved is absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.

The nominated person on the letter of authorisation will be present when dealing with intimate care/ toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

d) Toileting accidents:

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has an 'accident' of this nature 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. Parents will be subsequently contacted to inform of the incident.

e) 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. There are transparent windows on Learning Support Doors and the external windows are not obscured. Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought.

f) Changing for Games/ PE/ Swimming Safety Lessons

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. 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.

At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils.

g) Supervision of children

Children are adequately supervised during the school day and on all school related activities. When first aid is administered in the school this is done in the presence of other children.

#### h) Recruitment and selection of staff

The recruitment and selection of staff will be carefully considered. All applications will supply personal details, a resume of work experience and references to the school and Garda vetting will always be sought. All volunteers working in the school will do so under the guidance of the teachers.

#### i) Internet Safety

Children are adequately supervised on the internet in school. Children are not allowed to bring mobile phones to school, but may have consent to bring them for school related activities outside of school. The schools acceptable use policy outlines the decisions the school has taken in relation to technology including mobile phones, pictures etc.

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to principal and parents.

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

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on ‘Safety and Protection’,

The School Code of Discipline

Procedures: Anti-Bullying Policy .

Health and Safety Statement.

School Tours / Outings

#### **Principles for best practise in Child Protection**

- 1) The welfare of children is of paramount importance
- 2) A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/carers and families; but where there is conflict, the child’s welfare must come first.
- 3) Children have a right to be heard and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and level of understanding they should be consulted and involved in relation to all matters and decisions that affect their lives.

- 4) Early intervention and support should be available to promote the welfare of children and families, particularly where they are vulnerable or at risk of not receiving adequate care or protection.
- 5) Parents/Carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters which concern their family *except in cases which involve parental abuse*.
- 6) Actions taken to protect a child, including assessment, should not in themselves be abusive or cause the child unnecessary distress. Every action and procedure should consider the overall needs of the child.
- 7) Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation; the child must be seen in a family setting.
- 8) The criminal dimension of any action cannot be ignored.
- 9) Children should only be separated from parents/carers when all alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted. Re-union should always be considered.
- 10) Effective prevention, detection and treatment of child abuse require co-ordinated multi-disciplinary approach.
- 11) In practice, effective child protection requires compulsory training and clarity of responsibility for personnel involved in organisation working with children.
- 12) Early intervention and support should be available to promote the welfare of children and families, particularly where they are vulnerable or at risk of not receiving adequate care of protection.

## **Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse**

### **Neglect**

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an *omission*, where a 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, or medical care.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways *over a period of time* rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for supervision and safety. A child whose on-going failure to gain weight or whose height is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

## **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Examples of emotional abuse include:

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- Conditional parenting, in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions.
- Emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer.
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of a child.
- Premature imposition of responsibility on a child.
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of a child's capability to understand something or to behave and control himself in a certain way.
- Under or over protection of a child.
- Failure to show interest in, or provide age appropriate opportunities for, a child's cognitive and emotional development.
- Use of unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures.
- Exposure to domestic violence.

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## **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- Shaking
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

## **Sexual Abuse**

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

- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation.
- Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- Sexual exploitation of a child.
- Consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years old. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years. This means, for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16 year old girl and her 17 year old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting child sexual abuse.

## **Recognising Child Abuse**

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information.

- Considering the possibility – if a child appears to have suffered an inexplicable and suspicious looking injury, seems distressed without obvious reason, displays unusual behavioural problems or appears fearful in the company of parents/carers.
- Observing signs of abuse – a cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Children may make direct or indirect disclosures, which should always be taken seriously. Less obvious disclosures may be gently explored with a child, without direct questioning (which may be more usefully carried out by the Health Board or An Garda Síochana). Play situations such as drawing or story telling may reveal significant information. Indications of harm must always be considered in relation to the child's social and family context, and it is important to always be open to alternative explanations.
- Recording of information – it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be recorded and should include dates, times, names locations, context and any other information which could be considered relevant or which might facilitate further assessment/investigation.

## **Teachers**

### **Where an allegation is made by a child**

- Take a written statement
- Do not ask leading questions – simply reiterate what child has said back to them for confirmation.
- Explain that you will have to inform D.L.P.
- Do not promise to keep allegation a secret.

### **Where a parent makes an allegation:**

- Ask them to come to D.L.P. to make allegation
- D.L.P will ask for written statement.
- D.L.P. contacts HSE whether written statement is received or not.

### **Where allegation is against a School Employee;**

- Take note of allegation
- Ask for written statement (in detail)
- Report to H.S.E.
- Inform B.O.M. Chairperson who informs employee
- D.L.P./Chairperson seek legal advice – course of action will be guided by legal advice.

### **Recording**

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- Sign and date everything
- Stick to facts
- Record child's exact words
- Be aware of context

Every teacher should keep their file in a safe place.

Each file is collected by the office each June and returned in September.

### **What to record:**

Attendance & Punctuality

Appearance and Lunch

Physical injury – unexplained

Clothing

**Note:**

Maree school has fully implemented the Stay Safe Programme

A copy of the school's child protection policy which includes the names of the DLP and Deputy DLP is available to all school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. The name of the DLP is displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.