

Child Protection Policy

In accordance with our mission statement and aims, we in Killean Primary School, have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge and we will carry out this duty through our pastoral care policies which aim to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our children can learn and develop to their full potential.

We implement appropriate vetting procedures in the recruitment of staff and volunteers. We appreciate the need for awareness within this area of our responsibility and so all staff members receive regular training provided by the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection. This includes training for the Board of Governors. We follow guidelines issued by DE and the Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

We seek to protect our pupils by helping them to learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe. We do this

- through our curriculum work on Personal Development and Mutual Understanding.
- through our Religious Education Programme
- through our monthly assemblies
- through our display board in the main corridor which includes the names and photographs of the designated and deputy designated teachers (Mrs. Lambe and Mrs Gollogly) and which highlights the steps to take if they are unhappy about any situation.

The staff of this school has adopted a Code of Practice for behaviour towards pupils. This code is set out in the Code of Conduct Policy.

The purpose of the following procedures on child protection is to protect all pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in this school - teaching and non-teaching staff- has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child and the welfare of each child is of paramount consideration. The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in this school and all staff are aware that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

What is Child Abuse?

Neglect – the persistent or significant neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation; the persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care resulting in the significant impairment of the child’s health or development including non-organic failure to thrive.

Physical – actual or likely deliberate injury to a child or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

Sexual – the sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult’s or another young person’s own sexual gratification; the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles.

Emotional – persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

Bullying – Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in this school. Any child involved in such behaviour will initially be dealt with in accordance with our policy for promoting positive behaviour. All staff members are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully.

Any complaint by a parent that their child may be a victim of bullying will be fully investigated by the designated teacher for child protection and action will be taken to protect the victim. In all cases our positive behaviour policy is adopted. The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case and may include the loss of any privileges or position of responsibility he/she holds in the school. His/her behaviour will be monitored until staff members are satisfied that the problem has stopped.

If a pupil’s bullying behaviour persists the second stage will be to instigate the child protection procedures described below.

Procedures for reporting suspected or disclosed child abuse

The designated teacher for child protection is Mrs Lambe. In her absence Mrs Gollogly will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse or if a member of staff has concerns about a child **the member of staff must act promptly**

He/she should not investigate – this is a matter for the social services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with her and make full notes.

Mrs Lambe, as the designated teacher, will discuss the matter with Mrs. Gollogly, the deputy designated teacher, as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is kept. Mrs Lambe will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services.

If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral.

Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The principal may seek clarification or advice and consult with EA Designated Officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice.

The safety of the child is our first priority.

Where there are concerns about possible abuse the principal will inform in writing

- Social Services
- EA Designated Officer for Child Protection

PROCEDURES TO BE ADOPTED WHEN A COMPLAINT IS MADE AGAINST A MEMBER OF STAFF

If a complaint is made about a member of staff, the Principal must be informed immediately.

If the complaint is made against the Principal, the designated teacher must be informed and she will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Where the matter is referred to Social Services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils and may be suspended as a precautionary measure pending investigations by Social Services and / or PSNI.

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors and CCMS will be informed immediately

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

All records, information and confidential notes are kept in locked files. The only people with access to these files are the Principal and the designated teacher and deputy designated teacher. In the interests of the child, information may have to be shared with other professionals on a need to know basis. Child protection records will be kept indefinitely.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION3

We will update this policy in the light of any further guidance and legislation and will review it at regular intervals. The implementation of policy and procedures will be monitored and on-going evaluation will ensure its effectiveness. We regularly review our school policies on the Safe Use of Internet and Mobile Phones and Use of Photographs and Videos and seek parental co operation and support regarding the use of these.

Appendix 1

RECOGNITION OF CHILD ABUSE

Professionals working with children need to be aware of the indications of child abuse. It is essential that they consult with and share information with other relevant professionals.

This list of signs and symptoms is not a check list, but a guide. In all cases there needs to be an assessment of the nature of an enquiry or allegation in relation to the explanation offered and the family circumstances. Injuries alone are not always conclusive.

Suspicion should be raised by :

- Delay in seeking treatment
- Inadequate or discrepant explanations
- A lack of explanation for injuries
- A history of previous injury
- Failure to thrive
- The parent showing little or no anxiety about the child's condition
- The parent coldly blames the child
- Evidence of marital violence
- Evidence of factors associated with child abuse e.g. alcohol or drug abuse

Signs which may suggest neglect :

- Looks extra thin and poorly
- Well below average height and weight : 'failing to thrive'
- Complains of hunger, lacks energy
- Untreated condition or injury
- Repeated accidents, especially burns
- Left alone at home inappropriately
- Repeatedly unwashed, smelly
- Kept away from school medicals
- Reluctant to go home especially at weekends

Each indicator should not be seen in isolation and any assessment of neglect will need to take into account information from all the professionals who are involved with the family.

Signs which may suggest emotional abuse :

These signs are not in themselves indicative of emotional abusive acts by parents or carers and may be caused by other aspects of the child's living environment e.g. poverty, stressful change, bereavement.

Habit disorders

Rocking
Thumb sucking
Excessive masturbation
Over eating
Disturbed sleep

Conduct disorders

Withdrawal
Stealing
Destructiveness
Sweating and bedwetting
Excessive attention seeking
Running away

Affect disorders

Anxiety
Depression
Low self esteem
Frozen awareness
Absence of attachment
behaviour
Inappropriate seeking or
avoiding behaviour

Behavioural Extremes

Overly compliant or
disobedient
Overly passive or aggressive

Delays in Physical, Social or Intellectual Development

Poor growth
Speech delay
Under-achievement
Inability to form peer relationships
Inability to be independent or to concentrate

Self Mutilation

Head banging
Scratching or cutting
Pulling out hair
Attempted suicide

Signs which may suggest physical abuse

- Injuries not adequately explained by the pupil
- Current bruising/injury with a long history of bruising accidents
- Grip marks on arms
- Long marks from a belt or cane
- Stub marks from a cigarette
- Any symmetrical bruising
- Teeth marks
- Constant attention seeking: over pleasing / compliant behaviour
- Running away
- Kept away from school medicals
- Reluctant to go home especially at weekends

Signs which may suggest sexual abuse

- What pupil tells you
- Young children acting out precocious sexual behaviour with others e.g. grasping genitals, simulating intercourse
- Repeated open masturbation
- Young children, especially girls, behaving in a precocious sexually provocative way
- Running away
- Unhappy, isolated
- Aggressive eruptions/tantrums
- Kept away from school medicals
- Persistent problems with sleeping, bedwetting, nightmares
- Anorexia, bulimia, excessive comfort eating.