



St. Raphaela's Primary School

Policy on Child Protection and Code of Practice

As a school, we have an obligation to provide students with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well-being and protect them from harm. School personnel are especially well-placed to observe changes in behaviour, failure to develop, or outward signs of abuse in children.

- Mindful of this primary duty of care, the Board of Management of St. Raphaela's Primary School fully endorses "*Children First*", the designated guidelines for the protection and welfare of children issued by the Department of Health & Children, September 1999 and "*Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures*" issued by the Department of Education and Science in April 2001.
- The Board nominates Sr. Mary Corr as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) to act as a liaison with outside agencies such as health boards and as a resource person to any staff having child protection concerns.
- In the absence of Sr. Mary Corr, Mrs. Frances Talbot will act as Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- The Board will ensure that appropriate and on-going training as necessary will be available for the DLP and the DDLP.
- The Board fully endorses arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in Circular 0094/2006 from the Department of Education and Science in June 2006.
- Recognising that the safety and well-being of children attending the school is a priority, the Board undertakes to include (a) Child Protection and (b) Health & Safety matters as items on the Agenda of all Board of Management meetings forthwith.
- The Board will ensure that all school staff, teaching and non-teaching, are aware of their obligations under the guidelines detailed in "*Children First*" and the procedures to be followed in the event of concern.
- The Board recognises that it has two duties of care. The primary duty is the protection, safety and welfare of the children attending St. Raphaela's Primary School. The Board as an employer, also has duties and responsibilities towards its employees.

- As an employer, the Board will seek legal advice if an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee.
- The Board will adhere to the protocol outlined in "*Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures*", Department of Education and Science 2001 under Chapter 4: "Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse by School Employees", to authorise any actions required to protect the children in its care. The Board notes that school employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively. The employee should be treated fairly, which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. The Board accepts that the principles of natural justice and fair procedures must be adhered to.
- The Board believes that the academic, personal and social development of children flourishes in a culture where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and appropriate support is available for those in difficulty.
- The Board is committed to the maintenance of an environment where children feel secure, where they are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. All children in the school will be made aware that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried. In addition, opportunities will be included in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to keep them safe.
- The Board of Management undertakes to make this Child Protection Policy statement available to all parents and guardians at the time of enrolment and on a regular basis thereafter. This policy statement and "*Children First*" will be held in the school office and parents may ask to see them at any time.
- This policy statement regarding Child Protection at St. Raphaela's Primary School applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers, and contractors working in the school.
- This policy statement will be subject to review at the start of each academic year forthwith.

Signed : _____ Chairperson

_____ D.L.P.

_____ Deputy D.L.P.

Date : _____

Code of Practice for Child Protection

We at St. Raphaela's Primary School have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of our pupils. We will carry out this duty through our pastoral care system which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment and which values all of our students. One way in which we seek to protect our students is by helping them to learn about the risks of possible abuse, to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and to acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe. We do this by teaching the Stay Safe Programme as part of our SPHE curriculum. Members of staff will all have the opportunity to attend In-Service training from the Child Abuse Prevention Programme Team.

The staff of our school will adopt a Code of Practice for their behaviour towards students (see below).

The purpose of the following procedures is to protect our students by ensuring that everyone who works in the school has clear guidance on the action that is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. Our procedures follow those outlined in the Children First Document and as outlined in the D.E.S. guidelines. Our overriding concern is always the care, welfare and safety of each student.

What is Child Abuse?

Abuse may be perpetrated in the following ways:

- Neglect.** The persistent or significant lack of care or the failure to protect a child from exposure to danger resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development.
- Physical.** Physical injury to a child, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
- Sexual.** Exploitation of a child for another's own sexual gratification; the involvement of children 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 which 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.

Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse:

If a student makes a disclosure to a member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a student, the member of staff must act promptly.

She/he should not investigate - this is a matter for the social services - but should report these concerns in writing immediately to the Principal. In St. Raphaela's, the Principal is the Designated Liaison Person for such issues. The Principal will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to the director of community care. 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.

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal must be informed immediately. The above procedure will apply unless the complaint is about the Principal. Where the matter is referred to the Director of Community Care, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending an investigation by the social services. The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the staff member receiving the complaint should immediately inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

It should be noted that information given to staff members about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told.

Code of conduct for staff members:

This code is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It does not seek to cover all eventualities but to advise in general terms and to indicate what might be considered to be good practice.

1. Private meetings with pupils.

It is recognised that there will be occasions when staff must see children on their own. Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from such private interviews with individual students. It is recommended that as far as possible:

- Such interviews should take place in a room with visual access or with the door open.
- The door to the room should never be locked. Wherever possible try to ensure that other members of staff or students are working close by during the time of the meeting.
- Take just as long as is necessary to complete the business of the lesson or interview.
- Wherever possible sit opposite the student rather than side-by-side.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with the student.

- Be aware that attempts to comfort a student by any form of physical contact can be open to misinterpretation.
- If you are placed at risk by the action of a student (e.g. suggestive words or actions by the student) you should end the interview immediately. You should immediately find another member of staff and tell her/him what has happened. You should also inform the Principal and confirm details in writing to the Principal as soon as possible.

2. Physical contact with students.

As a general rule, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with students. However, it is unrealistic and unnecessary to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies.

- A distressed student, especially a younger one, may need reassurance involving physical comforting such as a parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact - unless it is necessary to protect the child or others or property from harm.
- Staff should not do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Physical punishment is illegal as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of restraint.
- Staff administering first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that it is done in the presence of others. However, no staff member should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency, simply because another person is not present.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that her/his actions have been or may be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal.
- We as a staff will not engage in rough physical games including horseplay, apart from structured sports activities.

3. Choice of teaching materials.

Teachers should avoid using teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted or reflect upon the teacher's motives for the choice.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature teachers should be aware of the danger that their use may be criticized after the event. If in doubt about the appropriateness of any material, the teacher should consult the Principal before using it.

4. Relationships and attitudes.

Staff should ensure that their relationships with students are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the students, and that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought when dealing with older children. Staff will never let allegations made by a child go unrecorded or unchallenged.