

Gaelscoil Mhuscraí

Child Protection Policy

Introductory Statement

Gaelscoil Mhuscraí wishes to ensure that all children attending the school are safe and well. Following on information days in 2002 and 2009 on Child Protection in schools it was decided to draft the following Child Protection for this school. The policy takes into account the provisions of the following pieces of legislation:

The Education Act 1998

The Child Welfare Act 2000

It is based on the following books:

Children First (Department of Health & Children 1999)

Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (Department of Education & Science 2001)

The policy was drafted in consultation with representatives of the parents, school staff and Board of Management.

Rationale

The Board of Management/Manager of Gaelscoil Mhuscraí has adopted the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and Procedures in relation to child protection and welfare. This policy is an outline of how Gaelscoil Mhuscraí proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all children attending our school.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

In this school we emphasise the creation of a positive climate and atmosphere in which each individual is valued and respected. We understand the importance of building effective communication within the school. Gaelscoil Mhuscraí is a “Listening school” where the pupils concerns will be addressed because we wish to provide a safe secure environment for all. In line with our ethos this policy is being drafted to ensure the protection and welfare of all pupils.

Aims

1. To promote the safety, protection and welfare of all the pupils in the care of the school.
2. To raise awareness of child abuse among the staff and all members of the school community (including teachers, the secretary etc.) by identifying the symptoms of sexual, emotional, physical abuse and neglect.
3. To inform all members of the school community of the procedures in place in this school for dealing with suspicions and allegations of child abuse.
4. To identify other policy areas which need to be amended as a result of the Child Protection Guidelines.
5. To identify curricular content and resources that contribute to the prevention of child abuse and to enable children to properly deal with abuse if it occurs.

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- neglect
- emotional abuse
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse

A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time. Definitions for each form of abuse are detailed in Children First (Dept. Of Health & Children) pp. 31 - 33.

Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse

A list of child abuse indicators is contained in Children First Appendix 1 pp 125 - 131. It is important to stress that, no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse.

These are:

- I. Considering the possibility
- II. Looking out for signs of abuse
- III. Recording of information

Each of these stages is developed in Children First pp. 34 – 35

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of Child Protection in Gaelscoil Mhuscraí.

It is the policy of Gaelscoil Mhuscraí to follow the procedures as laid down in Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (DES 2001) in conjunction with Children First (DHC 1998), in any case where we suspect, or are alerted to, child abuse, including where a child discloses abuse.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role of the Board of Management

It is the primary responsibility of the Board of Management/Manager to protect the children to whom they have a duty of care. The responsibilities of the Board of Management /Manager are outlined in Children First Guidelines pp. 50 – 51 and Child Protection Guidelines (DES) pp. 15 – 17.

They are as follows:

- A. The appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and a deputy DLP and a clarification of roles
- B. Responding to allegations /suspicions of child abuse
- C. Implementing a Child Protection Programme and the ensuing organisational and curricular implications
- D. Monitoring and evaluating the programme and policy

E. To ensure the necessary Staff training and Development

The appointment of the DLP and deputy DLP

At a meeting in November 2011, staff, in consultation with the manager of this school appointed the acting principal Cáit Ní Shiúrtáin as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Clár Ní Chathasaigh as Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP when she is unavailable. The DLP will be appointed at the first meeting of each new Board of Management and will remain unless so until a successor is appointed.

For the school year 2015/2016 Mairéad Uí Charthaigh was appointed DLP while Cáit Ní Shiúrtáin is on a year's career break. Clár Ní Chathasaigh will remain as Deputy DLP.

Responding to allegations or suspicion of Child abuse

(a) The role of the DLP (Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures 2.2.3/3.2/3.4/4.2)

- The DLP is the intermediary with outside agencies ie. Health Service Executive, the Garda Síochána and other parties with responsibilities for the protection of children. All matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of child abuse will be processed through the DLP.
- The DLP will inform all the school personnel about the procedures for child protection in the school and will attend extra training if necessary
- The DLP will ensure that each teacher has a copy of this policy on Child Protection
- If there is an anxiety, doubt, evidence or an allegation of abuse the DLP will seek advice from the Duty Social Worker (without naming the child at this stage) 'Child Protection DES' Section 3.2 pp. 11 – 12.
- Based on the advice given the DLP will either
 - Not report (but keep an account of the advice given – without naming the child). If they are not satisfied with this advice they can still report it (see Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures 3.2.3)
 - Report by phone/and in writing (on the standard report form available from the HSE) (see Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures 2.3.:3.2)
 - In the event of an emergency case or the non-availabilty of HSE staff the report should be made to the Garda Síochána
 - When a report is being made the Chairperson of the Board of Mangement/Manager of the school should be informed and a decision made on whether the parents/guardians of the child should also be informed. Usually the parents/guardians are informed that a report is being submitted unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.
- No matter what happens the DLP will keep, in a safe place, an account of the advice received and will not name the child. (Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures 2.5)
- The DLP will consult the chairperson of the Board of Management/Manager about the attendance of teachers at child protection conferences (see Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures 3.4)
- The DLP will keep abreast of developments regarding Child Protection
- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and a duty social worker is unavailable, Garda Síochána should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Health Board intervention.

(b) Responding to an allegation against a school employee

- If there is an allegation against a school employee both the DLP and the Board of Management/Manager roles to play because there are two procedures to follow (see Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures Chapter 4
 - *The employment issue* – The Chairperson and the Board of Management/Manager are responsible for dealing with the employee and legal aid should always be sought (see Child Protection Guidelines and 4.1, 4.3 & 4.4
 - *Reporting issue* – The DLP reports to the HSE (unless he/she is the person involved)
 - If the DLP is the employee involved the Chairperson of the Board of Management/Manager is responsible for both issues – the reporting and the employment issue

(c) Allegations of peer abuse and bullying

- If there are allegations or suspicion of abuse by another child/peer, the DLP will follow procedures as in Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures 3.2.

Responsibilities of all school personnel

(a) All school personnel have a responsibility (see Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures 2.3) in:

- Recognizing the possible signs of abuse as listed in
 - **Children First Guidelines** (1999) especially the following sections:
 - Chapter 3 Definition & recognition of Child Abuse and
- Appendix 1 Signs & symptoms of Abuse

- Handling disclosures from children appropriately & recording the discussion as in
 - Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures 2.4

- Reporting concerns to the DLP & to give her all the records kept as in
 - Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures 3.1.1 and
 - Children First Guidelines Chapter 4 Basis for reporting & standard reporting procedure

Attending child protection conferences, familiarising themselves with the Protocol (Children First pp 149 – 150) and if necessary, provide a report to the conference (see Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures Appendix 1)

(b) Organisational implications

School procedures already in place and new procedures being put in place will be examined with reference to the Children First Guidelines. Any child protection issues that may arise will be addressed: such as the following

Supervision: The school's supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks and before and after school.

Behaviour: Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

Visibility: Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school play ground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or sheds where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school play ground or to engage with adults who are outside of the school play ground.

Visitors: Teachers on play ground duty will be aware of visitors entering the school play ground and will ascertain their intentions. They will be supervised in the discharge of their business.

Bullying: Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our Anti-Bullying policy. If the behaviour involved is of a sexualised nature or regarded as being particularly abusive then the matter will be referred to the DLP.

Accidents: While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our Incident book and will be addressed under our accident policy as part of Health and Safety.

Children travelling in staff cars: Members of the school staff will not carry children alone in their cars except in an emergency if the child is in danger of death

Record Keeping: Teachers will keep each child's file updated with results of assessments carried out, dates and details of meetings with parents and notes from parents. Roll books will be updated daily. The records will be kept under lock and key. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis. All educational files of pupils who no longer attend this school are kept in the filing cabinet in the principal's office for 8 years.

Induction of Staff: The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES, 2001 and Children First Guidelines, 1999. The DLP will give a copy of this Child Protection Policy to all new staff. All new teachers are expected to teach the designated SPHE objectives for their class. The DLP and Deputy DLP are responsible for the mentoring of new teachers and for ensuring that new teachers know how to fill in the roll book correctly and informing the teacher of record keeping procedures within the school.

Induction of Pupils: All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE, Walk Tall, Stay Safe and SPHE and given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress.

Communication: Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open.

Confidentiality: The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child discloses personal information. Neither can the school take any responsibility for matters of a confidential nature that are discussed in the school environs.

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse will only be shared on a need to know basis in the interests of the child. When submitting a report to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána the DLP will inform a parent/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place that child at further risk.

Attendance: All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). Our school attendance will be monitored as per our attendance policy. With regards to child protection we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

Swimming: Children will be brought by bus to the swimming pool. Teachers will supervise outside the changing rooms in order to ensure the children's safety. Parents/Guardians will be informed of the procedures in place for swimming.

(C) Curricular Implications

In Gaelscoil Mhuscraí we emphasise an atmosphere and culture in which everyone is respected and which strives to support the development of the whole child and the people who work with them.

We contribute to the prevention of child abuse through teaching personal safety skills in the Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) curriculum.

We will use the Stay Safe programme as a resource in teaching these skills. Stay Safe will be used from Infants to Sixth Class and on alternate years. It will be taught in a five-week block to maintain the integrity of the programme. Children with special needs participate with their own classes. Teachers will endeavour to adapt and modify activities so that all children can participate. The learning support and resource teachers will supplement the work of the class teachers where necessary.

Any additional resources selected will be in keeping with the aims of this policy. Parents are invited to view the programme and may speak to the class teacher if they have any

concerns. If children are withdrawn, they will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom.

The DLP and Deputy DLP, will be responsible for monitoring and supporting new teachers in ensuring that the personal safety skills programme is taught.

Provision of Training & Development of Staff and Board of Management members

An information night on Child Protection issues was provided for the for the Board of Management of Gaelscoil Mhuscraí in June 2009. Training/information will be provided for the school staff and new members of the Board of Management when necessary. The Board of Management will provide funding for this where needed.

D. Monitoring and evaluating the policy

Success Criteria

We will evaluate the success of this policy using the following criteria:

- Delivery and participation by all staff in training
- Feedback from all staff
- Delivery of the SPHE curriculum
- Resources to support the delivery of SPHE especially the "Stay Safe" programme
- Assessment of the procedures by participants following a child protection case

Timeframe for Implementation

These procedures were implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management in November 2009.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 23 Nov 2009. The policy was distributed to staff members and parents of children in the school. Arrangements were made to communicate the policy to all parents at the start of each school year.

At the first staff meeting of every year the DLP will remind all teachers of the guidelines and a copy of this policy will be available to new staff members and new parents/guardians.

The following will also be available if required:

- Children First Chapter 3 & 4 & Appendix 1
- The Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures

Timeframe for Review

The policy will be reviewed after any incident in which the guidelines are used.

Provision for Ongoing Support

Provisions to be made to support teachers, pupils, parents and board members involved in Child Protection at policy and programme level include:

- Provision of the Parent's Guide to Stay Safe
- Staff and BOM will attend training in relation to Child Protection when provided (June 2009).

This statement has been ratified by the Board of Management of Gaelscoil Mhuscraí at a meeting held on 23rd November 2009 and will be implemented as and from that date.

It was reviewed in November 2010 and November 2011 and September 2015.

Registration number of Pupil _____

Date:

Observation:

✚ What happened?

✚ Where?

✚ When?

✚ Describe, with diagrams if possible, the physical injuries

✚ The explanations for these injuries using direct quotes from the child

Signature : _____

Date: _____

