

Child Protection Policy



DRUMHILLERY PRIMARY SCHOOL



INTRODUCTION

The following statements of principle, policy and procedure aim to set the conceptual framework which underpins the practices within Drumhillery Primary School. The ethos is reflected in all actions and decisions taken by staff as they follow the detailed guidance set out in the SELB Child Protection Procedures, DENI Circular 1999/10 Children (NI) Order, 1995 Guidance and the Southern Area Child Protection Committee Procedures.

The principles and philosophy which underpin our work with children are those set out in the UN Convention on the Right of the Child, (UK Agreement, 1991) and enshrined in the Children (NI) Order, 1995 (effective from November 1996). In particular the principle we support is that every child or young person has the fundamental right to be safe from harm and with proper care by those looking after them given to their physical, emotional, spiritual well being.

**UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON
THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

Article 3

“Children have the RIGHT to have their welfare considered
Paramount in all decisions taken about them.”

Article 12

“Children have the RIGHT to be heard.”

Article 19

“Children have the RIGHT to be protected from ABUSE and
NEGLECT.”

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CHILD PROTECTION

AIMS:

- To create a positive ethos so that the child feels secure and safe.
- To provide a listening environment encouraging children to share their concerns so that the caring role of the teachers is evident in all aspects of the child’s life.
- To establish vetting procedures with the school.
- To make each member of staff aware of the Code of Conduct and their duty to co-operate with the authorities regarding Child Protection.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

NEGLECT

The actual, or likely, 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.

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.

Possible Physical Indicators of Neglect

- constant hunger
- exposed to danger – lack of supervision
- inadequate/inappropriate clothing
- poor personal hygiene
- untreated medical problems
- emaciation

Possible Behavioural Indicators of Neglect

- tiredness, listlessness, lack of concentration
- lack of peer relationships
- low self-esteem
- destructive tendencies

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- compulsive stealing/begging
- frequent lateness/non-attendance at school
- chronic running away
- scavenging for food or clothes

PHYSICAL INJURY

Actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

Physical Indicators of Physical Injury

- Scratches
 - Bite marks or welts
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- Bruises in places difficult to see e.g. behind the ear, on the groin, under the arm
- Burns, especially cigarette burns
- Untreated injuries

Behavioural Indicators of Physical Injury

- Self-mutilation tendencies
- Chronic runaway
- Bullying
- Aggressive or withdrawn
- Admission of punishment which seems excessive
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Undue fear of adults
- Flinching at sudden movements
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fearful watchfulness
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries

SEXUAL ABUSE

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly

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comprehend and to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family roles.

Physical Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Soreness, bleeding in genital or anal area
- Itching in genital area
- Stained or bloody underwear
- Stomach pains or headaches
- Pain on urination
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Bruises on inner thighs or buttocks
- Anorexic/bulimic
- Pregnancy/abortion

Behavioural Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Chronic depression
 - Self-mutilation
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- Inappropriate sexual language for age group
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge for age group
- Sexualised play with explicit acts
- Making sexual advances to adults or other children
- Obsessive washing
- Low self-esteem
- Afraid of the dark
- Wariness of being approached by anyone
- Substance/drug abuse
- Unexplained large sums of money/gifts
- Truanting/running away

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. **(All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment)**. This is where it is the main or only form of abuse.

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Possible Physical Indicator of Emotional Abuse

- Short stature
- Poor hair
- Alopecia
- Poor skin
- Swollen extremities
- Recurrent diarrhoea
- Non-accidental injury
- Sudden speech disorders
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Self-mutilation

Possible Behavioural Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Rocking, thumb-sucking, hair twisting
 - Chronic running away
 - Poor peer relationships
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- Over reaction to mistakes
- Inappropriate emotional responses to stressful situations
- Self-mutilations
- Extreme of passivity or aggression
- Substance/drug abuse

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL

- To ensure the implementation of DENI 1999/10 is implemented.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher (and Deputy) is appointed.
- Ensure that all staff receive training.
- To ensure that all concerns are directed to the appropriate agency (eg Gateway Service, SELB Child Protection Team, Social Services, PSNI etc).
- To inform BOG as appropriate, especially Chair and Designated Governor For CP.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

- To undertake training and organise training for other staff.
- To assist in the drawing up of the Child Protection Policy and updating of the policy.
- To ensure that the policy is adhered to.
- To act as a point of contact for staff and parents
- Report concerns

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RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARENTS

Parents should play their part in Child Protection by:

- Telephoning the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note on the child's return to school, so as the school is reassured as to the child's situation.
 - Informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the child after school.
 - Letting the school know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home.
 - Familiarising themselves with the school's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying and Child Protection Policies
 - Reporting to the office when they visit the school
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IN-SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Procedures when a member of staff has a concern about a child in school.

Staff should immediately refer their concerns to the Designated Teachers, Mrs Lisa McMullan or Miss Gail Rodgers or to the Principal and Deputy Designated Teacher, Mr Keith Campbell. It would be helpful if the member of staff could make a brief factual note of what has been reported or observed which will then be given to the Designated Teacher. It will be up to the Designated Teacher to decide what to do at this point. It is important that the person who reported the incident treats the matter in confidence.

3.4 RESPONSE

In the event of an allegation of child abuse, the member of staff will:

- Listen to the child and accept what he/she said (Remember, if a disclosure is made, no promise of confidentiality can or should be given where abuse is alleged).
- Record statements.
- Explain what they have to do next and to whom they have to talk. **6**
- Reassure the child they have done the right thing to talk about it.
- Refer information to the designated member of staff.

Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the school's or nursery's ancillary or auxiliary staff sees such signs, he or she should immediately bring them to the attention of either the class teacher or the Designated Teacher and it may be appropriate for the necessary clarification to be carried out by the teacher/Designated Teacher. Such clarification may reassure staff that abuse has not occurred; but signs and symptoms which cause concern, while perhaps not a result of abuse, may nevertheless indicate that the child or his/her family is in need of social services intervention and the Designated Teacher for Child Protection should always be kept informed.

GUIDELINES FOR QUESTIONING

- Never ask leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind.
- Do not ask questions that would encourage the child to change his or her version of events in any way or which would impose your own assumptions e.g. "Tell me what happened" as opposed to "Did they do X to you?"
- Listen to the child. Do not interrupt if he or she is freely recalling significant events. Make a note of the discussion to pass on to the Designated Teacher. The note should record time, date, place and people who were present and what was said. Signs of physical injury observed should be described in detail or sketched. Under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed.
- Any comment by the child, or subsequently by a parent or other adult, about how an injury occurred should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, preferably quoting words actually used.
- Do not give the child undertakings of confidentiality but reassure the child that information will only be disclosed to those professionals who need to know.
- Notes of the discussion may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings.
- Be sensitive to what a child says, treat it seriously and value what they say.

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While discreet preliminary clarification from the child, parent or other carer will often help to confirm or allay concerns; it is not the responsibility of teachers to carry out investigations, or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers!

3.6 REFERRAL - CO-OPERATING TO SUPPORT AND PROTECT CHILDREN

Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse

The designated members of staff for Child Protection is Mrs McMullan/Miss Rodgers. Mr Campbell (Deputy Designated Teacher and principal should also be informed)

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 member of staff, discuss the matter with her and make full notes.

The designated member of staff will, as a matter of urgency, plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is made.

The Principal 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 Principal 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 the Designated Officer from the Education Board, 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.**

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3.6.1 Reports for Child Protection Conferences: -

- should focus on child's educational progress and achievements, attendance, behaviour, participation, relationships with other children and adults within the school and where appropriate the child's appearance.
- if relevant, should include what is already known about the child's relations with his or her family and the family structure.
- should be objective and based on evidence.
- should contain only fact, observations and reasons for concern.

Reports will be made available to the parents at the Child Protection Conference and may be used in court. All reports should be checked and signed by the Designated Teacher or her deputy.

3.6.2 Allegations against a member of staff

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply unless the complaint is about the Principal. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately in all cases.

3.6.3 Allegations against the Principal/Child Protection Officer

Any complaints must be referred directly to the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

3.6.4 Suspension from duties

Where the matter is referred to Social Services, 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 investigation by Social Services.

3.7 CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

3.7.1 For reasons of confidentiality the only people who may need to know are:

Principal/Child Protection Officer
Parents
Class Teacher(s) **9**
Chairman of Board of Governors
Professional bodies eg, SELB, Social Services, EWO
(Other members of staff will only be informed if it is deemed necessary by the Principal)

3.7.2 Record Keeping

All records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked drawer. The child is identified by his/her initials and date of birth.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the school's disciplinary procedures, a written record will be kept and made available to the Board of Governors annually.

3.8 CODE OF CONDUCT

Members of staff are aware of and adhere to the Code of Conduct which has been drawn up and agreed through Teachers' Negotiating Machinery and the SELB Code of Conduct for its staff.

4 STAFF IN-SERVICE

Our school is committed to in-service training for all staff. This is supported by additional staff meetings to clarify and develop Child Protection issues. Staff training was updated on 7th October 2015. The Designated Teacher and deputy will review training in line with their roles and responsibilities in due course. The Designated Teacher keeps a record of all training.

5 VETTING PROCEDURES

All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in the school are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

6 THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed in class activities and school assemblies. Other initiatives are organised which address child protection and safety issues:

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- The NSPCC regularly visits the school and provides information on a range of child protection issues through assemblies, talks, role-plays, video/DVD, puppet shows and resources.
- Primary 5 to Primary 7 children participate in a community awareness programme run by the PSNI, the 'CASE' programme.
- Primary 5 pupils take part in the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service talks on fire safety.
- Each year Primary 7 pupils participate in the 'BEE SAFE' activity day which is run jointly by the Health Promotion Agency and the Southern Health and Social Services Trust and involves all the emergency services.

7 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Policy and Procedures will be reviewed and updated in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary. Parents and children will be given appropriate information regarding Child Protection issues on a regular basis. They can consult with the Principal/Designated Teacher on any concerns or matters arising.

Updated September 2015

HOW A PARENT CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT

I have a concern about my child/a child's safety



I can talk to the class/form teacher



If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Principal (Mr Campbell) or the designated teacher for Child Protection (Mrs McMullan/Miss Rodgers)



If I am still concerned I can talk /write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors (Mr J Bell)



At any time a parent can talk to a social worker at the Gateway Team Tel: 0800 7837745 Or the PSNI at the Public Protection Unit Tel: 0845 600 80000

