

CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY & PROCEDURES

Article 3 (best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be the top priority in all actions concerning children.

Ethos

A key role of Ballymagee is to ensure that all children feel safe and protected within the premises and community of school. Our primary responsibility is the safeguarding of individual children and any concerns about their emotional or physical well-being must be addressed appropriately.

'Safeguarding encompasses both prevention and protection activity. It is the process of preventing impairment of children's health and development, and of ensuring they grow up safely and securely and provided with effective care, all of which collectively enables them to attain greater success in adulthood. Safeguarding also extends to protecting children from abuse or neglect, when it occurs, including the promotion and protection of children's rights. (SBNI Annual report 2013-2014)

We recognise the contribution that all staff and volunteers make in helping to make our school a safe environment. We promote a child-centred ethos where children are listened to by adults and taken seriously. We recognise that everyone in our school community has a part to play and is committed to safeguarding the children in our care by ensuring that all:

- Children are safe and protected in our school
- Members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, and all adults who have contact with the children in our school, have been subject to appropriate vetting procedures and have been provided with Child Protection training.

The Child Protection procedures we follow are designed to:

- Offer the greatest possible protection to vulnerable children;
- Encourage all staff to exercise their responsibilities towards children within an effective and legally secure framework;
- Ensure staff understand that the '...first step in recognising abuse is the ability to entertain the possibility of abuse taking place'. (Sgroi 1982)

Rationale

The Department of Education has issued detailed guidance to schools on dealing with all aspects of Safeguarding and Child Protection - A Guide for Schools (DENI 2017/04). The Children (NI)

Order 1995 also includes guidance entitled 'Co-operating to Protect Children'. Ballymagee Primary has adopted the SEELB/EA Child Protection Policy and Procedures. The abstract for parents summarises the key points from this document. The Children Order (1995) states that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in all decisions concerning the child. This is also reflected in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration. The 'paramountcy' of the child principle underpins our Child Protection policy and procedures. The issue of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

Safeguarding Team

- ❖ Designated Teacher - Mr Paul Totton
- ❖ Deputy Designated Teachers - Mr Gavin McCrea and Mrs Lorna Welsh
- ❖ Principal - Mrs Karen Small
- ❖ Designated Governor for Child Protection - Mrs Michelle Thomson

What is Child Abuse?

As defined in the children order, a child is a person under the age of 18 years

Child Abuse occurs when 'a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely by a stranger' (ACPC, 2005) Area Child Protection Committees Regional Policy and procedures.

Abuse of a child may take one or a number of forms, including neglect, physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse and abuse caused through domestic violence.

Neglect

- ❖ 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, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of a child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

Physical Abuse

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

Sexual Abuse

- ❖ Actual or likely exploitation of a child. This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non - penetrative acts. They may include non- contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse

- ❖ Actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection with severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.

Exploitation

- ❖ Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as slavery, servitude, engaging in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Domestic Violence

- ❖ Domestic Violence affects all members of a household. Given the vulnerability of children they are particularly susceptible to the impact of domestic violence which may affect their emotional, psychological, physical and sexual development. The majority of children who have experienced domestic violence meet the definition of 'children in need' as outlined within the Children (NI) Order 1995. For this reason all professionals in school and other outside agencies will adopt a zero tolerance policy in addressing domestic violence situations.

NB: A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or occur repeatedly over time.

Fuller explanations of the definitions and indicators of child abuse are available in the Ballymagee booklet, 'Child Protection Guidelines' which is issued to all adults working in a paid or voluntary capacity in the school.

Procedures For Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Where any member of staff, or other adult, has reasonable grounds to suspect abuse or risk of abuse they will report them immediately to the school's designated teacher for child protection, Mr Paul Totton or the deputy designated teachers, Mrs Lorna Welsh and Mr Gavin McCrea. As part of their special responsibilities in this area, they will ensure:

- That all staff are aware of these procedures;
- That arrangements are in place so that any suspected cases are reported to the Principal, to the appropriate Social Service Officer and to the Education Authority Child Protection Officer;
- That all **relevant** staff are kept informed about vulnerable children or children who are on the Child Protection Register.

The Procedures for reporting abuse are:

- The member of staff raises the concern with Mr Totton, Mrs Lorna Welsh or Mr McCrea and may submit a Record of Concern sheet outlining details of concern/incident.
- Mr Totton discusses the concern with the member of staff, makes a written report and after consultation with the principal, contacts the relevant authorities.

In an emergency situation where a child is deemed at risk and in need of immediate safeguarding or where the principal might not be available for consultation, the DT will take all necessary steps to safeguard the child in line with CP protocol.

The procedures above also apply to suspected cases of child abuse involving teaching or non-teaching members of staff and any other adults who are involved in the school.

The Preventative Curriculum

We place great emphasis on the importance of teaching our children how to deal appropriately with any situations that may pose a threat to their emotional or physical well-being. We aim to help our children to learn about the risks of possible abuse, help them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and to acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

A structured programme for Personal Development and Mutual Understanding is part of the curriculum we provide for each year group. This is supported by Circle Time activities in every class and supplemented by age appropriate workshops from Childline, CEOP, PSNI and the 'Love for Life' programme which is presented to our P6 and P7 pupils.

Our **main aims** are to ensure that:

- children have sufficient age appropriate knowledge about themselves to be able to recognise appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact;
- children are aware of strategies, which they may use to protect themselves from possible abusive situations.

Child Protection Screening

All adults working in the school or volunteering to help in any capacity are subject to child protection screening procedures and will have undertaken child protection awareness training in accordance with Education Authority guidelines.

CHILD PROTECTION IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

The Role of Parents

The over-riding concern of all adults in the school must be the care, welfare and safety of the child. The Children (NI) Order 1995 clearly identifies the welfare of the child as being of

paramount importance. We recognise that parents share these responsibilities and that they can help us to ensure that our school is a safe environment for every child.

Parents or others who have any child protection concerns should raise these immediately with Mr Totton, Mrs Lorna Welsh or Mr McCrea. Information about how to make a complaint about a member of staff, or other adult in the school, is given in the school's Concerns and Complaints Policy but Child Protection concerns should always be raised directly with the designated teachers named above.

We recognise that reporting abuse or suspected abuse is always difficult but the over-riding concern must always be the safety of the child.

We also want to keep parents informed about Child Protection issues. We encourage all parents to make a point of accessing the information displayed on our Child Protection notice board which is prominently displayed in the main school foyer. We will also issue information from time to time to keep parents updated on important Child Protection matters.

The role of the Board of Governors

Our school's Board of Governors has particular duties in relation to ensuring Child Protection Policies and Procedures are in place and are being implemented. Child Protection matters are an agenda item for each full Board Meeting. Mrs Michelle Thomson, has specific responsibility in relation to Child Protection. The DT teacher presents an annual report to governors on Child Protection and Pastoral Care issues. Child Protection vetting procedures are applied in relation to all appointments to the school.

Relevant Documents/Resources

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following school resources:

- Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers
- Intimate Care Policy
- DENI: 'Pastoral care in Schools - Child Protection'
- Child Protection Notice Board in school foyer
- Ballymagee Booklet - Child Protection Guidelines