

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY 2015-16

Gaelscoil Inse Chór aims to provide its pupils with the highest standards of care and protection, in order to promote each child's well-being and safeguard him/her from harm while in the school. The Board of Management have adopted the "Children First" Guidelines of the Department of Health & Children 1999 and the "Child Protection" Procedures of the Department of Education & Science 2001.

The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.

Practice

- Children First guidelines are followed and this is communicated to the parents at the beginning of each school year.
- Children who are taken alone are always in a room with the door open and other adults within earshot.
- Children who have toileting accidents are changed by two adults and parents are sent for. Where a child has toileting needs and an SNA is employed- a plan will be devised and followed in consultation with the parents.
- Parents must furnish the school in writing the names of people entitled to collect their child. Children will not be released to anybody not nominated by the parent until cleared with the parent.
- Children will not be released with anyone in a situation whereby the child may be in danger ie with someone appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Gardaí will be contacted if required.
- Children working outside of the classroom are encouraged to work in groups.
- Under no circumstances will a member of staff transport a child in a car alone.
- Garda Clearance is sought for all staff working with children.
- All staff sign a declaration annually to state their familiarity with this policy and that they are clear on its procedure.

Prevention

- Children are taught on safety issues and on how to protect themselves within the school SPHE program.
- Children are encouraged to talk in an open environment
- Staff are regularly updated and informed of in-service training on child protection.
- RSE weeks are run every second year covering sensitive topics in the SPHE program. Further information can be obtained in the relevant policies on the school website.
- Child Protection is on the agenda for all monthly BOM meetings.
- Stay Safe Program is covered in full.
- This policy is sent to the Parents' Committee, is available in the office and online at www.gaelscoilinsechor.ie

Procedure

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The Principal, Ciarán Ó Raghallaigh will act as DLP. Should circumstances warrant it, the Deputy Principal, Colm Ó Nualláin shall act as DLP. The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with Health Boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of child abuse should be processed through the DLP.

Guidelines for Recognition of 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: -

- Considering the possibility
- Looking out for signs of abuse
- Recording of information

Handling Disclosures from Children

When information is offered in confidence the member of staff will need to act with sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child, and retain his/her trust, while explaining the need for action and the possible consequences, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support him/her but not to make promises that cannot be kept e.g. promising not to tell anyone else. The welfare of the child is regarded as the first and paramount consideration. In so far as is practicable, due consideration will be given, having regard to age and understanding, the wishes of the child.

The following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse.

- Remain calm.
- Listen to the child with sensitivity and openness.
- Take all disclosures seriously
- Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises.
- Do not stop a child recalling significant events
- Do not over react
- Explain that further help may have to be sought
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record of dates, times, names, locations, context and factual details of conversation.

This information should then be passed onto the DLP and a record will be retained in the school.

If the DLP is unsure as to report to the Health Board, he will contact the Health Board seeking advice on the matter. No names will be put forward to the Health Board when seeking advice. Should the Health Board advise to make a report then that will be done by the

DLP. If a report is not to be made, the teacher who brought the case to the DLP will be notified in writing as to why this is not being done. The teacher will also be made aware that they can submit a report should they still wish.

If the reporting person or member of the school staff and the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures for reporting as laid out in 'Children First' – Section 4.4 pg 38 (Appendix 10) will be adhered to.

The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed before the DLP makes contact with the relevant authorities unless the situation demands that more immediate action to be taken for the safety of the child in which case the Chairman may be informed after the report has been submitted.

Any Professional who suspects child abuse should inform parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána unless doing so is likely to endanger the child. . This will be done in a face-to-face meeting with both parents/guardians if possible and a minimum of two people from the DLP, the DDLP and the Chairperson of the BOM. Any parent who attends such a meeting will be provided with a contact name and number for the health board social work service should they need to avail of further support or seek further information about the process independently of the school

The Board of Management will also be made aware of any advice sought from the Health Board.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and a duty social worker is unavailable, an Garda Síochána should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Health Board intervention.

Allegations Against School Employees

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management or the DLP is the safety and protection of the child. However, employees also have a right to protection against claims which are false or malicious.

As employers, the Board of Management should always seek legal advice as the circumstances can vary from one case to another.

There are two procedures to be followed:

- i. The reporting Procedure
- ii. The Procedure for dealing with the Employee.

The DLP has responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board. The Chairperson, Board of Management has responsibility, acting in consultation with his/her Board, for addressing the employment issues. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

Reporting

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should immediately act in accordance with the procedures outlined in “Child Protection.”

A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management. All staff at GSIC have received training in Child Protection Procedures.

School employees, other than the DLP who receive allegations against another school employee, should immediately report the matter to the DLP. School employees who form suspicions regarding conduct of another school employee should consult with the DLP. The procedures outlined in will then be followed.

The chairperson of the Board and DLP should make the employee aware privately

- a) That an allegation has been made against him/her
- b) The nature of the allegation
- c) Whether or not the Health Board or Gardaí has been/will be/must be/should be informed.

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. The employee should be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, Health Board, and legal advisers.

The priority in all cases is that no child be exposed to unnecessary risk. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, the Chairperson should take any necessary protective measures. These measure should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee in any way unless to protect the child.

If the nature of the allegations warrant immediate action in the Chairperson’s opinion, the Board of Management should be convened to consider the matter. The Board will consider feedback if any has been received from the Health Board, Gardai or relevant source. This may result in the Board of Management directing that the employee absent him/herself from the school forthwith while the matter is being investigated (Administrative Leave). When the Board of Management is unsure as to whether this should occur, advice should be sought from the Gardaí and/or the Child Care Manager of the Health Board and the legal advisers to the Board of Management.

Administrative Leave

Should the Board of Management direct that the employee absent him/herself as above, such absence of the employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not suspension. The DES should be immediately informed.

Board of Management

The Chairperson should inform the Board of Management of all the details and remind the members of their serious responsibility to maintain strict confidentiality on all matters relating to the issue and the principles of due process and natural justice.

Integration with Other Policies

SPHE: As the Stay Safe is being implemented, this reflects on our SPHE Policy.

Health/Safety: As safety of the children is paramount, both policies may be drawn upon.

Anti-Bullying: This policy may be referred to in a case of child protection.

Code of Behaviour: It is important to stress the unacceptable behavior in school regarding the private body parts.

Data Protection: All data around Child Protection will be processed and stored as per policy.

Ratified by Board of Management on _____
Date

Signed _____
Chairperson, Board of Management