



**Saint Columba's National School
North Strand
Dublin 3**

Child Protection Policy

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This policy has been reviewed in line with the revised Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011). It has been adopted by the Board of Management, Parents and Teachers on November 30th 2011.

This Policy has been informed by the:

1. Children First - National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, (Revised 2011)
2. Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, Department of Education and Science, 2001.

This Policy attempts to summarise these documents. The Primary aim of these guidelines is to give direction to all personnel in dealing with allegations/suspicions of child abuse.

What are the main categories of Abuse?

Neglect: Where a child's need for food, warmth, shelter, nurturance and safety are not provided, to the extent that the child suffers significant harm.

Emotional Abuse: Where the child's need for affection, approval and security are not being met and have not been met for some time by their parent/carer.

Physical Abuse: Where the child is assaulted or injured in some way that is deliberate.

Sexual Abuse: Where the child is used, sexually, by others.

These definitions are covered in greater detail in Children First : National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) Part 2 (pages 8 & 9) and Appendix 1 (pages 70-74).

When a child discloses

The safety and wellbeing of children must be a priority for all those working in/for schools. The following advice should be following when a child discloses to any adult:

- Listen to the child
- Do not ask leading questions
- Keep calm - offer reassurance
- Explain that further help will be sought - it cannot be kept a secret
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record

Guidelines for Recognition of child abuse

A list of indicators is contained in Appendix 1 "Children First" pages 70-74. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive.

There are commonly three strategies:

1. Considering the possibility
2. Looking out for signs
3. Recording the information

Even then, a child's situation and family circumstances should be considered, bearing in mind that child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture.

Designated Liaison Person

The Board of Management must appoint a Designated Liaison Person - DLP - who has responsibility for reporting to the Health Board, or Gardai, and a Deputy Designated Liaison Person – DDLP. The DLP must follow procedures as in the Guidelines. A standard Reporting Form is available in the Guidelines. (Appendix 3, pages 78 & 79)

It is the responsibility of the Health Care Manager to investigate and/or interview all concerned, not the DLP.

The names of the DLP and the DDLP shall be displayed on a notice on the school notice board.

Confidentiality

All information regarding concerns of possible Child Abuse should only be shared on a “need to know” basis. For instance, a parent/guardian will not be informed of reporting, if it puts the child at further risk. This decision must be recorded.

In emergency situations, where the Health Board cannot be contacted and the child appears to be at risk, the Gardai should be contacted immediately.

The Chairperson will normally be informed in advance of a report being made, but if immediate action is necessary, the Chairperson will be informed after the submission.

Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse

The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report “reasonably and in good faith”. This Act provides cover for all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal.

Qualified Privilege

Where the person provides information to the DLP or the Board Chairperson, such a person is covered under common law as having qualified privilege.

Freedom of Information Act

Members of the public may access reports relating to them through the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003. However, the Act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information received by them in confidence.

Allegations or Suspicions Re. School employee

If an allegation of abuse is made against an employee, the most important consideration for the Board of Management is the protection and safety of the children, while the employee must be treated fairly, mindful of damage that can be done through false or malicious

claims. The DLP only deals with the reporting to the Health Board, while the Chairperson and Board address the employment issue.

School employees, who receive allegations about, or suspect another employee, should report to the DLP. (See standard reporting procedures in section 3 of the Guidance document). [If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.]

The employee, the Chairperson and the DLP should inform the employee privately, that:

1. An allegation has been made against him/her.
2. The nature of the allegation.
3. Whether or not the Health Board or Gardai has been/will be informed.

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. A written response should be obtained with- in a specific time-frame. If the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action the Board should be convened. Legal advice should be sought if Administrative Leave is being advised. This would not imply any degree of guilt, but is necessary for an investigation. The Department of Education and Skills should be informed of such advice. Strict confidentiality must be maintained by all Board members, to respect due process and natural justice for all concerned.

Designated Liaison Person – Ann Creaner

Deputy Designated Liaison Person – Emma Walkin

The Designated Liaison person shall normally be the Principal Teacher and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person shall be the Assistant Teacher.