

## *Child Protection Policy*

### *Introductory Statement*

The staff, parents and BOM of St. Eithne's G.N.S. Edenmore has developed and agreed this policy in line with the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and Procedures for schools in relation to Child Protection and Welfare.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:

- Prevention - Curriculum Provision
- Procedures - procedures dealing with concerns/disclosures
- Practice - best practice in child protection

### *Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the school*

St. Eithne's G.N.S. seeks to help our pupils to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. In line with our school's mission statement, which in part states, ***our school is a safe and trusting place to be***, we strive to create a responsive, happy and caring environment where children feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect and that those concerns will be acted on.

### ***Aims***

#### ***This policy aims to:***

- ensure that all the school community ( including teachers, parents, S.N.A.'s, secretary, caretaker etc.) are aware of and familiar with the " Children's First " and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and or disclosures of child abuse in all its forms – emotional, physical, sexual and neglect.
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community
- Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school.
- put in place clear procedures for good practice to protect all children and school personnel
- To enable children to properly deal with abuse if it occurs.
- Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff.

## **Prevention**

### **In St. Eithne's School we work to ensure that our school is physically and emotionally safe.**

The Stay Safe Programme is the primary resource used to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the school's SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection. The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two year cycle plan.

Our SPHE programme promotes the protective skills of self esteem and assertiveness. Circle time methodology is used on a whole school basis. Our anti bullying policy is implemented in all classes. Co-operative interpersonal skills are developed through working in pairs and in groups. Older pupils are encouraged to positively with conflict and negotiation. Consensus building is also developed.

On enrolment of their child, parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school and a copy of the Stay Safe "A parent's guide" will be provided. For overview of programme see appendix attached.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

## ***Procedures***

All staff ( teachers, S.N.A.'s, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in Children First and the Department of Education and Science document Child Protection , Guidelines and Procedures .

### ***The procedures/ guidelines are laid out as follows:***

- 1. Appointment of a designated liaison person (DLP)***
- 2. Roles, Responsibilities and Guidelines***
  - 2.1 Role of BOM.***
  - 2.2 Role of staff members (teachers, S.N.A.'s, caretaker, secretary etc.)***

### *2.3 Role of D.L.P.*

## *3. Case Conferences*

## *4. Organisational Implications*

### *1.0 Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP)*

- The BOM of this school has appointed Aileen Corboy as the DLP to have specific responsibility for child protection and
- Janet Lynch has been appointed as Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP if she is unavailable for whatever reason.
  
- The position of DLP will be addressed at the first meeting of each new BOM. The DLP will continue to act as such until such time as she is replaced by the BOM for whatever reason.

### *2.0 Roles and Responsibilities*

#### *The staff and BOM of this school have agreed:*

- The BOM has **primary responsibility** for the welfare of all pupils
- The DLP has **specific responsibility** for child protection in the school.
- All staff have a **general duty of care** to ensure that all arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.

#### *The BOM will arrange for:*

- \* The planning, development and implementation of an effective child protection programme
- \*the monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness
- \*the provision of appropriate staff development and training

#### *Specifically they will*

- appoint a DLP and deputy DLP
- have clear procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse
- monitor the progress of children at risk

- Ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse.
- Investigate and respond to allegations against a school employee if he/ she has been reported to the Health Board or Gardaí
- Decide on teachers attendance at child protection meetings/case conferences and to advise teachers before attending such meetings/conferences

***Procedures for BOM in cases of allegations or suspicions of child abuse by a school employee:***

**A. Reporting**

***In the event of receiving a complaint or suspicion re. an employee:***

- The DLP will immediately inform the chairperson
- She will seek a written statement of the allegation from the person/agency making the allegation. Parents/Guardians may make a statement on behalf of a child.
- The DLP will seek advice from the relevant Health Board and will take responsibility for reporting, based on this advice.
- If the DLP, following consultation with the Health Board, decides that the matter is not for reporting, she must inform the Chairperson. They must then inform, in writing, the person or agency making the allegation, of the reasons for this decision. If this person or agency still has concerns, they are free to consult with or report to the relevant Health Board or Gardaí on an individual basis.

The provisions of the Protection for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply, once they report reasonably and in good faith.

- If the DLP, following consultation with the Health Board , decides that this matter is for reporting she will inform the Chairperson, who will proceed in accordance with the Procedures in the Child Protection Guidelines ( 1999 pg.16)
- The DLP/Deputy DLP completes a standard reporting form as comprehensively as is possible.

- When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse he/she will always seek legal advice and base his/her response on this advice.
- She/he will privately inform the employee of the fact and nature of the allegation and whether or not it has been reported by the DLP to the Health Board. ( Refer to 4.2-4.3. pg,16 of Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (DES 2001).

The Chairperson has a duty to afford the employee fairness and due process- he/she is entitled to details and a copy of the written allegation, to advice and representation and an opportunity to respond to the Board within a week.

### ***B. Responding***

- When the Chairperson becomes aware of an allegation of abuse he/she will always seek legal advice and base his/her response on this advice.
- The Chairperson will consider whether there is a risk to pupils' safety. If the Chairperson considers that there is a risk-he/she may require the employee to take immediate administrative leave. If unsure the Chairperson will consult with the Health Board/ Gardaí.
- If administrative leave has been invoked, the Chairperson will inform the DES. The Health Board (in some cases the Gardaí) may also be notified in accordance with legal advice received.
- Once it is deemed necessary by the DLP and Chairperson to make a report (after receiving advice from the Health Board) the Chairperson will convene and inform a meeting of the BOM as soon as possible.
- Where the alleged abuse has taken place within the school, or relates to the abuse of pupils of the school by school employees outside of school time, the BOM will investigate the matter. They will convene a further meeting, once the relevant information has been gathered. At the meeting the BOM will consider in detail
  - The allegation made and their source
  - The advice given by relevant authorities
  - The written responses of the employee

At this meeting also

- The person/agency who is alleging abuse by the school employee should be offered an opportunity to present his/her case. They may also be accompanied.
- The BOM must deal with the matter sensitively and the employee must be fairly treated.
- The BOM will make a decision on action, if any, based on their investigation and will inform the employee of this in writing. They will inform the DES of the outcome, if the employee has been absent on administrative leave.
- Where it is not possible for the BOM to conduct an enquiry into allegations (e.g. where abuse has occurred in past employment, or where the employee is undergoing investigation by relevant authorities), the Chairperson will act on advice of authorities. The Chairperson will maintain close contact with the Health Board and receive reports and records from them where appropriate.

2. Role of the staff member (to include teachers, S.N.A.'s caretaker, secretary etc.)

- It is the responsibility of all teachers and staff members to familiarise themselves with the *Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (1999) especially

***Chapter 3 Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse***

***Chapter 4 Basis for reporting and Standard Reporting Procedures  
Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse (see attached)***

***The staff and management of this school have agreed:***

***\*All concerns/disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate)***

***\*Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.***

- ***A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality --- information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a need to know basis***

## ***Guidelines for teachers and staff in handling***

### ***1. Disclosures from children***

When a child discloses alleged abuse to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively. Great care must be taken not to abuse the child's trust. This should not be a formal interview. Follow this procedure:

#### ***Listen to the child.***

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.

Confidentiality should not be assured—explain that further help may be sought.

Record the discussion accurately noting

What, where and when

Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries.

Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate.

Retain the record securely

The staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate allegations of abuse.

The DLP should then be informed and given relevant records.

If the suspected abuser is the DLP then the suspicion and any records will be passed on to the Chairperson who will proceed as per guidelines.

### ***2. Suspicious of abuse:***

#### ***a. Staff members who suspect abuse should refer to:***

***Children First Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999) especially***

- ***Chapter 3***                      ***Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse***
- ***Chapter 4***                      ***Basis for Reporting and standard Reporting Procedures***

- **Appendix 2**                      **Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse**

- b. Staff members should observe and record over time the dates/signs/symptoms/behaviour causing them concern.
  - c. They should inform the DLP and pass on all records.
  - d. Staff members will note any marks or bruises and will record child's explanation.

### 2.3. **Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

- The DLP acts as a liaison with outside agencies, Health Boards, Gardaí and other parties with child protection concerns.
- The DLP will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Children First Guidelines in the school.
- She will photocopy and circulate to all staff **Chapters 3 & 4 & Appendix 1** of these guidelines and advise on good practice. The DLP will be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse. She will keep records of these consultations.
- The DLP will seek advice from the Health Board.
- The DLP will report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to the Health Board or / and Gardaí Síochána based on this advice.
- The DLP will maintain proper records in a secure, confidential manner and in a secure location.
- The DLP will keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection.

### **Guidelines for the DLP in handling reported concerns and disclosures**

- Where the DLP/Deputy DLP have concerns about a child, but are not sure whether to report the matter to the Health Board, they should seek appropriate advice. To do this the DLP/Deputy should make informal contact with the assigned (on duty) Social Worker. The DLP/Deputy in this case, should be explicit that she is requesting advice and not making a report. If advised to report the matter, the DLP will act on that advice.

- A report will then be made to the Health Board by the DLP/Deputy in person, by telephone or in writing. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of Health Board staff, the report should be made to the Gardaí. The DLP should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the BOM, who should then follow the procedures as outlined in *Chapter 4 ( Section 4.3)of Children First National Guidelines (1999)*
- A standard reporting form is completed by the DLP/Deputy as comprehensively as possible ( See *Appendix* )
- Parents/Guardians will normally be informed that a report is being made. It may be decided that informing the parent/carer is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk. The decision not to inform the parent/carer should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- When there are allegations or suspicions of Peer Abuse the DLP will follow the same procedure.
- Parents of all parties will be notified and the DLP will inform the Chairperson.
- Principal and class teachers will make arrangements to meet separately with all parents to resolve the matter.
- The school will make arrangements to minimise the possibility of the abusive behaviour recurring.

### *3. Child Protection Meetings ( Case Conferences)*

- A request is made from the Health Board through the DLP who should consult with the Chairperson of the BOM of the school. The Chairperson may seek clarification through the DLP as to why the attendance of the school employee is necessary and ascertain who else will be present.
- The school employee may complete a report for the meeting/conference. (See Appendix 3)
- The school employee will be advised if children/parents/guardians are going to be present. The school employee may contact the *Chairperson of the Child Protection Meeting* for advice.
- The school employee may keep a child's behaviour under closer observation, if requested to do so. This may include observing the child's behaviour, peer interactions, school progress or informal conversations.
- In all cases, individuals who refer or discuss their concerns about the care and protection of children with Health Board staff, should

be informed of the likely steps to be taken by the professionals involved.

- Where appropriate and within the normal limits of confidentiality, reporting staff will be kept informed about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation following on from their report.

Teachers attending a child protection meeting/case conference should familiarise themselves with the protocol outlined on pgs. *149-155 of Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999)*

#### ***4. Organisational Implications Induction of Teachers & Ancillary Staff.***

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Children's First Guidelines (1999). The DLP will give a copy of **chapters 3&4 and Appendices** and this **Child Protection policy** to all new staff.

#### ***Practices***

The following areas have been considered by the staff and board of management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the staff and BOM have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

#### ***Physical Contact***

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult. While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining its appropriateness:-

- is it acceptable to the child
- is it open and not secretive
- the age and development of the child

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

### ***Inappropriate Physical Contact by pupils***

Children in the school setting can at times be overly emotionally attached to their teacher especially where small group or one to one teaching is taking place. This attachment can manifest itself sometimes in wanting to show affection to their teacher which can appear inappropriate to an onlooker.

Such behaviour is also not in the best interest of either pupil/teacher. The pupil becomes clingy and dependent and the teacher leaves himself/herself open to allegations of misconduct.

Should a teacher have any concerns, a meeting will be arranged with the pupil's parents and the matter discussed. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file. This is for the protection of all parties.

### ***Visitors / Guest speakers***

Visitors / Guest speakers/ should never be left alone with pupils. The school (principal / teachers) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of all such personnel and to ensure that the material in use by same is appropriate.

### ***After school activities/classes***

Classes / training etc. that take place after school are never given to pupils on their own.

### ***Transport/escort of pupils***

Teachers/ancillary staff are directed not to give lifts or escort sick pupils home on their own. In the event of an emergency where this directive cannot be implemented a full record of event is reported to principal and parents.

### ***One-to one teaching***

One to one teaching may at times be in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment. Parents of children who are to be involved in one to one teaching will be informed and their permission sought. Work being carried out by special needs assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

### ***Life Skills coaching***

St. Eithne's school is very fortunate to be able to offer guidance re. life skills to pupils. This guidance is given in an open environment. Written parental consent is sought before a pupil can attend such sessions.

### ***Intimate care/toileting needs***

Prior to the pupil coming to school, a meeting between parents, class teacher, S.N.A. and if appropriate the pupil will take place. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs. The staff involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when the particular staff are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the pupil's file. Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedures will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents.

### ***Toileting accidents***

Clean underwear will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has a toilet accident they can change. If a pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents cannot be contacted, the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In such situations 2 members of staff should be present.

A record of all incidents will be kept and principal and parents notified.

A supply of sanitary towels will also be kept in the school.

### ***Changing for games/PE/Swimming***

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/PE/swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal areas and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/volunteers be expected or allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child.

At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils.

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to principal and parents.

### ***Links to other policies/planning areas***

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on Safety and Protection  
Code of Behaviour

***Procedures:*** Anti Bullying Policy  
Health and Safety statement

***Practice:*** PE policy including strand on Aquatics  
School Tours / Outings

### ***Review and Monitoring***

*This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the BOM on an annual basis and when the need arises. The BOM will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.*

At the first staff meeting of every school year the DLP will remind all teachers of the guidelines and copies of ***Chapter 3&4& Appendix 1 of the Children First Guidelines*** will be given to those who require them.

### ***Ratification and Communication***

This policy was ratified by the B.O.M. on 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2004 and reviewed April 2007

Parents were notified of its existence through the school newsletter. A copy of the policy, which is kept in the Principal's office, may be assessed by parents at any time. It can also be viewed on the school website.

## *Curricular Content*

### *2<sup>nd</sup> class*

Implementation of the SPHE programme as laid out under the 10 strand units will enable our pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes pertaining to self-esteem, esteem for others and the environment and skills pertaining to self-care and disclosure. Healthy eating, positive attitudes to drug use and anti-bullying awareness will be introduced. The SPHE programme will be supported by using the Walk Tall resources, Alive-O and Stay Safe programmes.

### *3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>*

Our SPHE programme will be implemented according to the 10 strand units. Knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in previous classes will

be built on. Children will be enabled to develop intra- personal skills and inter-personal skills. As children mature they will be challenged to develop their decision-making skills. They will be encouraged to develop self-protection skills pertaining to smoking and alcohol. Peer pressure and the influence of the media will also be examined. The development of self-esteem, esteem for others, assertiveness, awareness of feelings and skills around self -protection and disclosure will underpin our teaching. Our SPHE programme will be supported by the use of Walk Tall resources, anti-bullying materials, RSE materials and the Stay Safe programme.

### *5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Classes*

Our SPHE programme will be implemented according to the curricular objectives as laid out under the 10 strands in the SPHE Curriculum. Skills, knowledge and attitudes developed in earlier classes will be enhanced.

Children will continue to develop self-awareness and positive attitudes to themselves, others, their environment and wider world in which they live. Self protection and respect for others will be fostered, decision making skills developed, peer influence and media bias examined. Knowledge of drugs and positive attitudes to drug use will be further developed.

Children will be enabled to develop good group-building skills, anti-bullying awareness and conflict resolution skills. Self protection will be emphasised and protection of younger, less-able people.

Positive attitudes to sexuality will be developed and respect for self and others fostered.

The SPHE programme will be supported by the use of the Walk Tall materials, RSE and Stay Safe resources.