



# Child Protection Policy

## Introductory Statement

The BOM of Our Lady's BNS has adopted the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and Procedures for schools in relation to child protection and welfare. This policy is an outline of how Our Lady's BNS proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all children attending our school.

The Staff, Parents Association and BOM of Our Lady's Boys School updated this policy in October 2016.

Our school, in our policies, practices and activities will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare.

Our school will;

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations.
- Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave them open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children.
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.
- Stay Safe programme will be fully implemented by all teachers.

## A) Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Our Lady's BNS seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. We strive to create a happy safe environment for the children where they feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect and their concerns will be addressed.

## **B) Aims of this Policy**

- 1) Provision of personal 'safety-skills' education for all pupils through programmes like 'Stay Safe', 'Walk Tall', 'Relationship and Sexuality' etc.
- 2) Creation of a safe, trusting, responsive and caring school environment.
- 3) Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community.
- 4) Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all pupils and staff (both teaching and ancillary).
- 5) Ensure that all staff are aware of and familiar with the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting any suspicions or allegations of child abuse.

## **C) Responsibility in Reporting Child Abuse**

- 1) There is a moral obligation on any organisation involved with children to provide them with the highest standard of care in order to promote their well-being and safeguard them from harm.
- 2) Organisations (eg schools) may be legally responsible for their failure to provide adequate care and safeguards for the children in their care.
- 3) Schools have a duty and responsibility to safeguard children by -
  - a) Promoting the general welfare, health, development and safety of children.
  - b) Adopting a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting both teaching and ancillary staff.
  - c) Raising awareness within the school staff about potential risks to children's safety and welfare.
  - d) Developing effective procedures for responding to and documenting accidents and complaints.

## **D) Categories of Abuse**

The following are the main categories of abuse to which children may be subjected;

<b>Neglect</b>	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Emotional</b>	<b>Sexual</b>
Circumstantial	Non-accidental injury	Relationships	Contact /
Significant harm	Failure to protect	Domestic violence	Non contact
Willful	Bullying	Bullying	

**Remember;**

- Child abuse may occur in any type of family
- Child abuse may occur outside families
- An adult well known to the child usually perpetrates the abuse
- Abuse is perpetrated by adults in trusted positions
- Neglect is the most frequently reported form of child abuse
- Children with special needs are especially vulnerable to abuse

**E) Responsibilities of the Board of Management**

The Board of Management is obligated to put in place, in the interest of child protection, the following safeguards;

- A written **Policy on Child Protection** and relevant procedures
- Curricular provision for lessons to children on personal health and safety
- Training for staff and Board Of Management members
- Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
- Monitor and evaluate policy, procedures and school procedures and school practices annually
- Support for the DLP and staff
- A review of the school's **Child Protection Policy** shall be conducted annually by the Board of Management
- The school authority shall put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review and arrange for these to be dealt with as quickly as possible
- The Board of Management shall make arrangements to inform school personal that the review has been undertaken. Written notification that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the Parents Association (or where none exists directly to parents). The standard notification included in Appendix 2 shall be used for this purpose. A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the patron and/or the Department.

**F) The Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

In this school the DLP is the school Principal, Ms. Clíona O'Keeffe and the Deputy DLP is the school's Deputy Principal, Mrs. Denise Dempsey. Both have specific responsibility for child protection.

The name of the DLP will be displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.

## **Role of the DLP**

- Liaise with outside agencies, HSE, Gardai and other parties with child protection concerns
- Keep records of any concerns
- Report to Chairperson of the BOM
- In addition to informing the school authority of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made.
- At each Board of Management meeting the principal's report will include the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the board meeting.
- A copy of the school's child protection policy which includes the names of the DLP and Deputy DLP will be made available to all school personnel and the Parents' Association and must be readily accessible to parents on request.
- Will inform all school personnel of the availability of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES and Children First Guidelines in the school.
- DLP will circulate the DES guidelines and photocopy/circulate to all staff Chapters 3 & 4 & Appendix 1 of the Children First Guidelines and advise on good practice.

## **Curricular provision and child abuse prevention**

In order to contribute to the prevention of child abuse and neglect through curricular provision, we will implement the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, which includes the Stay Safe Programme.

## **G) Guidelines on Staff Responsibilities**

- Staff are provided with copies of the following guidelines and it is the responsibility of all staff to familiarise themselves with the guidelines.
- *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures published by the Department of Education and Science 2001. (available on DES website)*
- *Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999, especially,*
  - *Chapter 3 Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse*
  - *Chapter 4 Basis for Reporting & Standard Reporting Procedures*
  - *Appendix 1 Signs and Symptoms Of Child Abuse (available on the Department of Health and Children website)*
- Where there has been a suspected or reported incident of abuse to a member of staff said staff member must;

- a) Report said incident to the DLP in compliance with the Criminal Justice Act 2011
- b) Record exactly what was said by complainant, without prejudice or opinion and with utter confidentiality
- c) The DLP is obliged to report said incident to the appropriate authorities in compliance with the Criminal Justice Act 2011

## **H) Procedures for the Reporting of Child Abuse**

The following is the correct procedure for reporting child abuse when a direct disclosure of or suspicion of such abuse has been disclosed to or is suspected by a member of staff.

**1) Staff member → DLP → HSE → Chairperson → Parent/Guardian**

The school is entitled to know how a case is progressing or the outcome of the case which it has referred to the HSE.

## **I) Organisational Implications**

### **Accidents**

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our "Incident Book" and will be addressed under our accident policy as part of Health and Safety.

### **Attendance**

Our school attendance will be monitored. With regard to child protection we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse. Before a parent/guardian takes their child from school during the day they must sign the "Egress Book" in the office.

### **Behaviour**

Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

### **Bullying**

Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our Anti-Bullying policy. If the behaviour involved is of a sexualised nature or regarded as being particularly abusive then the matter will be referred to the DLP.

### **Children travelling in staff cars**

Members of the school staff will not carry children alone in their cars at any time.

### **Communication**

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/Oral Language/RE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open. Further details on communications are found in the school's Communication Policy.

### **Recruitment**

Our school will ensure compliance with the Department's circulars and any other legal requirements in relation to Garda vetting of school personnel and other persons who have or may have unsupervised access to children. Substitute teachers (and anyone else) must supply a statutory declaration, a form of undertaking and be registered with the Teaching Council as required by the Teaching Council Act 2016.

### **Garda Vetting**

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016, which came into effect on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016, makes it mandatory for people working with children or vulnerable adults to be vetted by An Garda Síochána National Vetting Bureau. The Board of Management have a responsibility in relations to coaches, mentors, volunteers and parents who assist in the school on a regular basis. It is now mandatory for all such volunteers to be e-vetted.

### **Induction of Staff**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, DES, 2001 and Children First Guidelines, 1999. The DLP will give a copy of the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, Chapters 3 & 4 and Appendix 1 of Children First and this Child Protection Policy to all new staff. All new teachers are expected to teach the designated SPHE objectives for their class.

### **Induction of Pupils**

All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE, Walk Tall, Stay Safe and SPHE. All new parents are given a copy of the school's enrolment policy. The policy outlines the procedures parents and children should use when contacting the school if there are absences or concerns of an educational/personal/family matter. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress. All parents are given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

### **Confidentiality**

Departmental confidentiality guidelines will be followed.

### **Record Keeping**

Teachers will keep each child's file updated with results of assessments carried out, dates and details of meetings with parents and notes from parents. Reports and correspondence will be kept in the Principal's office under lock and key. Digital record of attendance will be updated daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis. All educational files of pupils who no longer attend this school are kept in the filing cabinet in the Principal's office for 5 years. Further details on record keeping are found in the school's Record Keeping Policy.

### **Supervision**

The school's supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks and before and after school. Principal/Deputy Principal will be involved before/after school supervision. The rota to cover 10.30 break and lunchtime breaks is also displayed on the staff notice board.

### **Visibility**

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school play ground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school play ground or to engage with adults who are outside the school play ground.

### **Visitors**

All visitors to school must sign in at the office and wear the designated visitor's badge. Children are not allowed to open the school door to any adult / visitor to the school. Visitors must use the intercom system and speak with the school secretary before being allowed access to the school building.

## **J) Allegations against School Employee**

In the event of an allegation of abuse against a school employee the following key considerations and procedures must be followed:

- a) Protection of children - their safety and well-being a priority.
- b) Any allegation of abuse must be treated with sensitivity and fairness - each employee has a right to a full and fair enquiry.
- c) The recognised reporting procedures in (G) above are to be followed in respect of the allegation.
- d) Chairperson proceeds to deal with the matter using agreed procedures.

## **K) Role of DLP in said Allegations against school employee**

- 1) DLP notified of allegation
- 2) DLP informs Chairperson BOM
- 3) DLP pursues matter on behalf of alleged victim and follows referral procedures in (F)

#### **K-1) Role of Chairperson**

On receipt of a report or allegation of abuse against any school employee either directly or from the DLP the chairperson will:

- Privately inform the employee that said allegation has been made.
- Tell the employee the nature of the allegation.
- Inform the employee if the Health Board has been informed.
- Seek legal advice. Inform the Board of Management of the allegation.

#### **K-2) Role of the accused Employee**

On receipt of a written allegation of abuse the employee is requested to respond in writing to the B.O.M. within a specified time (eg two weeks) and is informed that said response will also be passed on to the Health Board.

#### **K-3) Role of the Board of Management**

- Special BOM meeting convened - members informed of (a) the nature of the allegations against the employee, (b) the action taken and (c) the outcome of the consultations.
- Both the accuser and accused are afforded the opportunity to present their case to the BOM.
- The BOM will inform the DES of its decision to invoke administrative leave of absence with regard to
  - (a) Formal approval for paid leave,
  - (b) Sanction for employment of a substitute teacher.
- Strict confidentiality must be maintained.
- Any decision taken by the Board should have due regard to the advice given by authorities which have been consulted, eg Health Board, legal advice, An Garda Síochána etc.

### **L) Success Criteria**

We will evaluate the success of this policy using the following criteria:

- Delivery and participation by all staff in appropriate training
- Delivery of the SPHE curriculum



- Resources to support the delivery of SPHE
- Delivery and participation by children in the Stay Safe Programme
- Assessment of these procedures by participants following a child protection case
- Feedback from all staff

### **M) Timeframe for Implementation**

These procedures will be implemented following ratification by the BOM.

#### **Timeframe for Review**

At the first staff meeting of every year the DLP will remind all teachers of the "Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children". Copies of Chapter 3 & 4 & Appendix 1 & Appendix 2 of the guidelines will be given to those who require them. This policy will be reviewed in September of each school year.

#### **Responsibility for Review**

DLP, Principal and all Staff.

### **N) Ratification and Communication**

The plan will be ratified by the school's Board of Management and will be available in the Principal's Office on request.

The policy will be available to parents of children in the school. Arrangements will be made to communicate the policy to all parents at the start of each school year.

**Chairperson BOM:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_