

BALLYCLARE NURSERY SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child states that "Children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse by those looking after them" (Article 19). It also states that "When organisations make decisions which affect children, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration (Article 3).

We at Ballyclare Nursery School strictly adhere to the principle that "the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration"(Children N.I. Order 1995).

All schools have a pastoral responsibility towards their young children and we at Ballyclare Nursery School take all reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare of the children in our care is safeguarded and that their safety is preserved. Children are individuals whose rights, needs and welfare are paramount. Every child is valued as an individual, is treated with dignity and respect and their right to personal privacy is respected. Every child has the right to be involved and consulted on their own intimate care to the best of their abilities and their views should be taken into account.

All teaching and non-teaching staff will be given guidelines to follow as to how to:

- 1) become aware of what constitutes abuse
- 2) identify possible signs of abuse
- 3) contact the designated teacher and her deputy if required
- 4) follow the correct procedures
- 5) follow the correct procedure when an allegation has been made against a member of Staff.
- 6) Promote the relationship and partnership with parents.

Guidelines

- 1) **What constitutes abuse?**
"Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or of a failure to provide proper care"

This may take different forms-

- **Neglect**- the actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or failure to protect a child from danger, from cold or starvation. This includes the persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.
- **Physical injury** - the 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 sexual exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family roles.
- **Emotional abuse** - actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This is where it is the main or only form of abuse.

These types of abuse apply equally to children with disabilities but the abuse may take slightly different forms, for example, lack of supervision, or the use of physical restraints such as being confined to a wheelchair or bed.

2) **Identifying possible signs of abuse**

It is preferable to prevent abuse or intervention from taking place at the earliest possible stage. Staff (teaching and non-teaching) should observe any change in appearance of a child or changes in behaviour etc. Care must be taken as there can be other causes for this - bereavement, domestic violence, drug, alcohol or solvent abuse.

Possible signs of abuse could be:-

Bruises, particularly bruises of a regular shape which may be made by strap or hand, also bite marks, cuts or burns.

Indications of physical neglect, such as inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparent deficient nutrition.

Indications of emotional abuse, such as excessive dependence or attention-seeking.

Indications of sexual abuse, such as inappropriate sexual behaviour, precociousness and withdrawal.

Notice should also be taken of marked deterioration in performance and / or increased absenteeism.

3. Designated Teacher, Deputy and Other Contacts

Mrs. K. M. Castles is the designated teacher in charge of Child Protection.

Mrs. C. Luney is the deputy designated teacher.

Mr. G. Davidson is the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Mrs. L. O'Hara is the N.E.E.L.B. designated officer (Tel. 028 9448 2200).

P.S.N.I. Care Unit, Newtownabbey 028 9025 9305 and Ballymena 028 2566 7214.

N.S.P.C.C. - 0808 800 5000.

4. Following The Correct Procedures

Staff should be vigilant. All concerns must be recorded and reported to Mrs. K. Castles. Complete confidentiality must be observed and no member of staff, teaching or non-teaching may discuss possible signs of abuse outside school.

All staff members, students and parent volunteers will be vetted and made fully aware of child protection procedures and issues.

Where staff see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, seek some clarification from the child with tact and understanding. These concerns should be reported immediately to Mrs. K. Castles or, in her absence, her deputy, Mrs. C. Luney. Care must be taken when asking children and when interpreting their response. One must not ask leading

questions which may be later interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind.

Staff should initiate the conversation by saying "Tell me what happened " and staff should listen to the child's response without interrupting. Staff should make detailed notes recording time, date, place, people present, actual words used by the child and any signs of physical injury, which can be sketched if necessary but never photographed. Under no circumstances should a child's clothing be removed.

Staff should not give undertakings of confidentiality as it may be necessary to disclose information to other professionals if the child is to receive appropriate help.

ROLE OF DESIGNATED TEACHER

Mrs. K. M. Castles will liaise with outside agencies. In her absence this role will be taken by Mrs. C. Luney. All members of staff, including ancillary and auxiliary will report any relevant information to Mrs. Castles who will then if necessary consult the Board's designated officers.

If any child makes a disclosure to a staff member which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a staff member has her own concerns about a child, she must report it promptly to Mrs. Castles, without investigating the incident. She will discuss the incident with Mrs. Castles, plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is made.

The Principal will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Principal may seek advice and consult with N.E.E.L.B.'s designated officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our first priority.

Proper records should be kept. They should be clear and concise. Written records should be kept from members of Staff who received the information, set out as follows:-

- the nature of the information
- who gave it

- the time, date and circumstances
- a description of signs and symptoms if possible
- detail of any advice sought, from whom and when
- decision reached as to whether case should be referred to Social Services
- how, when and by whom this was done
- otherwise, reasons for not referring to Social Services.

Pupil records, progress reports etc., will be kept in a secure location and the school will maintain sound policies on confidentiality, providing information to other professionals, submitting reports to case conferences and attending case conferences.

The Designated Teacher will prepare an annual report on any child protection issues for presentation to the Board of Governors.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF & STUDENTS, PARENT VOLUNTEERS AND TEMPORARY TEACHERS

1. No member of staff should be totally alone with a child without being visible to another staff member.
2. If a child requires changing, only a staff member may help him / her with the minimum of physical contact. The staff member concerned should always inform another staff member before beginning her task.
3. Access NI screening forms are to be completed by prospective volunteers and the applicants must be passed prior to the trip taking place. With the exception of the child's parents, only staff members are to toilet children on trips. All groups are to stay with their designated staff member. Guidelines for volunteers, fully explaining their position, will be given out prior to the trip. They will also be required to wear a name badge. Governors will give their consent annually to the Principal using screened volunteers to work in the classrooms or to accompany the staff and children on trips.
4. All members of staff should ensure that their relationships with and behaviour toward the children in their care should be appropriate and beyond reproach.

5. Staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with the children in their care although this should not discourage them from providing physical comfort to a distressed child as any caring parent would do.
6. All staff are advised that physical response to misbehaviour is illegal unless it is by way of necessary restraint to avoid injury to themselves or others as per the guidelines on safe restrictive handling.
7. Where a child indicates that he / she is uncomfortable with physical contact, staff should respect their wishes, unless contact becomes necessary in order to protect the child, property or others from harm.
8. All staff must ensure that when required to administer first aid they are in full view of another member of staff.
9. All visitors to Nursery must report to the Principal on entering the building. Other professionals working with the children will do so under staff supervision.
10. The Principal will only engage temporary teachers who have been included on the N.I. Substitute Teacher Register.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF

Should a complaint about possible child abuse be made against a member of staff the Principal must be informed immediately. If the matter is referred to Social Services the member of staff will be removed from duties involving children and may be suspended from duty pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the deputy designated teacher must be informed immediately. She will then inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure the necessary action is taken.

1. The Principal and / or Board of Governors will always seek advice from N.E.E.L.B. if any allegations are made against a member of staff.

2. A written record is kept of every stage of the procedure, whether a referral is made or not.
3. Where a complaint is made directly to the Principal, the issue will be thoroughly investigated.
4. The designated teacher must then be informed (if he/she is not the subject of the complaint) who will begin to record.
5. Advice is sought by the Principal (if he/she is not the subject of the complaint), who will make an initial assessment to establish if there is sufficient substance in the allegation to warrant further action
6. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be consulted.
7. The Principal and Chairperson (providing neither are the subject of the complaint) will decide either that
 - a) The allegation is apparently without substance and no further action is necessary.OR
 - b) An immediate referral to Social Services or Police is warranted.AND/OR
 - c) The allegation concerns inappropriate behaviour which needs to be considered under the disciplinary procedures.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

It is essential to foster trust and good relationships with parents in school. Parents will be reminded in the Annual Report and in other communications of certain key elements affecting our Pastoral Care Policy.

Teachers and parents must constantly communicate with each other, particularly if they are worried about the child seeming withdrawn, ill or worried about something.

The collection arrangements for each child as initially agreed between parent(s) and teacher must be respected and must not be changed without the express permission of child's parents who should give his / her teacher adequate warning.

It is the policy of this nursery school that the child's safety is paramount and staff will refuse to hand a child over to an unauthorised person or to a person under sixteen years of age.

A strict access policy is also in operation within the school for the majority of the school day and the access system will be operated from 9.10 a.m.(morning session) and 12.40pm (afternoon session).

Parents will be made fully aware of both access and collection policies at the parents' meetings held in June and when their child starts nursery.

December 2008