**St Cronan’s Senior National School**

**Scoil Chrónáin**

**Child protection procedures**

**Definition of Child Abuse:**

Child Abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

**Neglect:** can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific moment. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child is being neglected.

**Emotional Abuse:** occurs when a child’s need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child’s behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. A child may be affected by an event in his/her life and staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child's emotional needs are being neglected.

**Physical Abuse:** is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child may have been physically abused.

**Sexual Abuse:** occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. Staff must inform the DLP if he/she is concerned or suspicious that a child may have been sexually abused.

**Designaged Liaison Person:**

The Board of Management has appointed School Principal, **Loreto Desmond** as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and **Suzanne Doyle,** Deputy Principal, as the deputy DLP. The role of the DLP is to liaise with all relevant agencies, whether in seeking advice, reporting or in follow up consultations. If informed by a member of the school community of a concern the DLP should in the first instance seek advice by phone, from a senior child care officer/social worker/manager/designated person employed by the Health Board. It is incumbent on the DLP to follow through on all advice from the Health Board. Written records should be kept of all phone calls and meetings.

**Basis for Reporting to a Health Board**

A health board should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. With regard to emotional abuse and/or physical neglect, consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional neglect or physical neglect would constitute reasonable grounds for concern.

**Procedures in dealing with a disclosure/suspicion from a child/third party:**

* Teachers/SNAs who suspect child abuse/neglect should report their concerns to the DLP at the first instance and carefully record their observations over a period of time.
* Disclosures of Child Abuse/neglect from a third party will be reported to the DLP. If a third party starts to tell a teacher/sna about an alleged child abuse incident the teacher/SNA will ask them to speak to the DLP. If the person does not inform the DLP the teacher/SNA will do so.
* Where a child discloses alleged abuse/neglect to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively. It is not the role of any staff member or DLP to investigate an incident/allegation/suspicion. His/her role is to listen and record information. Great care must be taken not to abuse the child’s trust. This should not be a formal interview.
	+ 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 may not be guaranteed - explain that further help may have to 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

Sign and date the record

Retain the record securely

**Reporting concerns**

* The teacher/SNA reports the matter directly to the DLP. The information on individual cases will be restricted to the teacher/SNA immediately involved with the child and will be on a *need to know* basis.
* The DLP will record the incident. It is not the function of the teacher or the DLP to investigate the issue. The DLP makes a report to the health board and informs the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
* Informal contact with the designated person in the Health Board may be made seeking advice as to whether a report should be made.
* If the advice is not to refer, the DLP will record this advice as the reason for non-referral.
* If the advice from the Health Board is to refer the case, the DLP will do so. However, prior to referring, the DLP will inform the parent of her intention to refer, unless this course of action is injurious to the child.
* Following referral and the completion of the standard form, the school will have no further part to play in the investigation.
* If a case conference is required, the DLP will be invited to attend.

All records will be held in a central, securely locked location.

**Allegations against an employee:**

* The DLP seeks a written statement of the allegation
* Employee is made aware of the allegation against him/her
* The Chairperson of the Board informs the employee **privately** that

(a)an allegation has been made

(b) the nature of the allegation

(c) whether or not the matter has been reported to the health board by the DLP

* The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation
* The employee is asked to give a written response
* If the chairperson decides that immediate action is necessary he/she should direct the employee to absent themselves from the school with immediate effect. The employee goes on administrative leave.
* The chairperson must inform the board
* If an allegation is made against the DLP all information will be passed on to the Chairperson who will proceed as per guidelines.
* On conclusion of any investigation the BOM will then determine the employment status of the employee.

**Organisational Implications and Prevention of Child Abuse**

**Education and links to other policy areas**

The Stay Safe programme is the main resource used in the school in the education of children on abuse prevention. Formal lessons are taught in 3rd and 5th classes in accordance with the school plan for SPHE. Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible and are reflected in school life. This will be done in conjunction with the school’s Anti Bullying policy outlined in the Code of Behaviour.

Issues involving Health and Safety are addressed in the Health and Safety Statement.

**Gárda Vetting**

All staff employed in St Cronan’s SNS, who have contact with the pupils of the school, will be Garda vetted. Teaching Council arrange teacher vetting for newly qualified teachers. Staff will be asked for copies of their vetting forms and these will be kept on file in the principal's office.

**Supervision**

School supervision policy and routines will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks.

**Behaviour**

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour.

**Visitors**

All visitors to the school must do so via the front door and report to the school secretary.

**Swimming/Games/PE**

Children are brought by bus to the swimming pool and are accompanied by teachers/SNA. Children are supervised in the changing rooms at all times by two adults – two female and two male. Children are expected to dress and undress themselves for games and swimming. Where they are unable to this the parent/guardian will be invited to accompany the child for the activity/outing. One teacher will do bank duty and record any incident.

**Children travelling in staff cars**

Teachers will not carry children alone in their cars. At least two children must travel with the teacher in the car or another adult and child.

**Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff**

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of this policy and the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011). Training of all staff will occur annually.

**Dealing with children on a one-to-one basis**

If a staff member/visiting professional such as Speech and Language therapist/ Occupational therapist has to work/deal/communicate with children on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open if there is not a glass partition fitted on the door.

**Attendance**

With regards 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.

**Toileting Accidents**

Adults working with children with intimate care needs will always make sure that any physical contact is for the purpose of meeting the needs of the child. Adults will always respect the dignity of the child.

In all cases where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care, a meeting will be held between parents/guardians, teacher, SNA, principal and the child (if it is deemed appropriate). The specific needs of the child will be addressed and a decision made on how best to meet those needs. A written copy of what is agreed will be kept on file in the school.

**Review**

Child protection policy is reviewed annually and/or as circumstances dictate.

This policy was reviewed by the board of management on;6th October 2020

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Chairperson