

ST MACNISSI'S PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection

The general principles, which underpin our work, at St MacNissi's Pre-School are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, "Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland" (DHSSPSNI, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools" Circular 2017/04 (amended September 2019; updated June 2020) and the SBNI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017) and Safeguarding update No4 (September 2024).

The following principles form the basis of St MacNissi's Pre-School's Child Protection Policy:

- The child or young person's welfare is paramount.
- The voice of the child or young person should be heard.
- Parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together.
- Partnership.
- Prevention.
- Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances.
- Protection; and
- Evidence based and informed decision making.

POLICY

** (*this policy forms part of St. MacNissi's Primary School Child Protection Policy*)

- In St MacNissi's Pre-School we are committed to creating a safe environment for children which is free from abuse and where any suspicion of abuse is dealt with promptly and appropriately. St MacNissi's Pre-School staff must follow the guidelines agreed by the Board of Governors of St MacNissi's Primary School and the Pre-school Committee, regarding the reporting of any suspected child abuse or neglect- this is our legal and professional obligation.

PROCEDURES

- All staff, volunteers etc (including new) engaged in working with children in the pre-school will have undergone vetting through Social Services before commencing work in the pre-school. This vetting consists of Access NI checks, two-character references and a declaration of health. All appointments within the group will be subject to a probation period until the group is satisfied that the applicant is fully suitable to work in the setting.

GOOD PRACTICE FOR PREVENTING ABUSE

- All staff and volunteers shall receive appropriate training and updates regarding recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse.
- The layout of the setting will allow constant supervision of all children.
- Appropriate adult / child ratios will be followed at all times.
- No adult will be left for extended periods of time with individual or small groups of children.

RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

- If a member of staff has concerns about the welfare of a child or if abuse has been disclosed to them, he/she will immediately report their findings to the pre-school teacher and Designated Teacher. The teacher will monitor / observe the child in question to determine whether there is cause for concern. In cases where it is felt a child is in immediate danger, he / she will report these concerns immediately without monitoring, to the Single Point of Contact (SPOC Tel:- 028 90259299).
- The designated person for child protection on the management committee will be informed, without disclosing the child's identity / record details.
- Parents will be informed following consultation with the Social Services Gateway Team.

SPECIFIC AIMS

- To increase staff awareness in the area of suspected child abuse. The policy will include a definition of child abuse and guidelines for the identification of suspected abuse.
- To set out clear procedures to be followed by all staff in the case of suspected abuse including:
 - the role of individual members of staff
 - the role of the Designated Teacher Pre-School.
 - subsequent referral to outside agencies

The policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly.

The Children (NI) Order 1995 reinforces the statutory obligation on the education sector to play its part in the reporting and prevention of child abuse.

The SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION TEAM at St. MacNissi's Pre-School

Designated Teacher	Mr. J. McAuley; Mrs P. McCorry
Deputy Designated Teacher	Mrs R. Mitchell; Mrs D. Burns
Chair of the management Committee	Mrs. R. Mitchell

The team may co-opt other members as required to help address specific issues, for example the SENCO, ICT Co-ordinator from the Primary School setting.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher

The designated teacher and deputy designated teacher must:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role.
- Organise training for all staff (whole school training).
- Lead in the development of the Pre-School's Child Protection Policy.
- Act as a point of contact for staff and parents.
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents.
- Make referrals to Social Services Gateway team or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate.
- Liaise with the Education Authority's (EA) Designated Officers for Child Protection.
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns.
- Provide written annual report to the Board of Governors regarding child protection.

5.2 The Pre-School Leader

The Leader must ensure that:-

- DENI 2017/04 guidance is implemented and updated within the school.
- He attends training on Managing Safeguarding and Child Protection.
- A designated teacher and deputy designated teacher are appointed.
- All staff receive child protection training.
- All necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner.
- The Chair of the Board of Governors is kept informed.
- Child protection activities feature on the agenda of the Board of Governors meetings and termly updates & annual report are provided.
- The school's child protection policy is reviewed annually, and that parents and pupils receive a copy/summary of this policy at least once every 2 years.
- Confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need-to-know basis.

5.3 The Designated Teachers for Child Protection

The Designated Governor should avail of child protection awareness training delivered by CPSSS and will take the lead in child protection issues in order to advise the management Committee on:

- The role of the Designated Teachers.
- The content of Child Protection policies.
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school.
- The content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teacher's Report.
- Recruitment and selection and vetting of staff.

5.4 The Chair of the Management Committee

The Chair of the Committee should:

- Ensure that he/ she has received appropriate Education Authority training.
- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment.
- Ensure that the school has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy.
- Ensure that governors undertake appropriate child protection and recruitment & selection training provided by the Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) and the Governor Support and Human Resource departments.
- Ensure that a Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed.
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the Pre-School leader.
- Ensure that the Committee receive termly updates and a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity.

5.5 Other Members of School Staff

Staff in St. MacNissi's Pre-School work with children over long periods of time and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators, and hear allegations of abuse. They should remember the 5 Rs: **Receive, Reassure, Respond, Record** and **Report**.

The member of staff must:

- refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teacher(s) for Child Protection.
- listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief and support the child.
- act promptly.
- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child.
- Avail of whole school training and other relevant training regarding safeguarding children.
- Not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures.
- Not** investigate.
- Not** ask leading questions.

In addition, Pre-School staff should:

- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home conditions, including disclosures of domestic violence.

We will take seriously any concerns which are raised about a pupil in our school who has self-harmed and/or has expressed suicidal thoughts. The Designated/Deputy Designated teacher(s) will immediately follow the school's Child Protection procedures.

5.6 Role of Parents

Parents should play their part in safeguarding by:

- Telephoning/emailing the school on the morning of their child's absence, or sending in a note/emailing on the child's return to school, so that school is reassured as to the child's situation.

- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the child after school.
- letting the school know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home.
- familiarising themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Intimate Care, Addressing - Bullying, Positive Behaviour, E-Safety and Child Protection Policies.
- reporting to the office when they visit the school.
- raising concerns, they have in relation to their child with the school.

5.7 The Management Committee

The Management Committee must ensure that the school fulfils its responsibilities in keeping with current legislation and DE guidance including:

- having a Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually.
- having a Staff Code of Conduct for all adults working in the school.
- attendance at relevant training by governors and ensuring that up-to-date training records are maintained.
- the vetting of all staff and volunteers.

CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE

Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger, who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both. The abuse may take a number of forms, including:

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse means the ill-treatment or neglect, which leads to physical, sexual or emotional injury or harm.

NEGLECT:

the actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including nonorganic failure to thrive;

PHYSICAL INJURY:

actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

SEXUAL ABUSE:

any behaviour (physical, verbal, virtual/digital) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation) without their informed consent or understanding.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This is where it is the main or only form of abuse.

IDENTIFICATION OF ABUSE:

Because of our day-to-day contact with individual children, we as teachers – but also non-teaching staff, including lunch-time supervisors and ancillary staff – are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms or changes in appearance, behaviour, learning pattern or development. Such symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes, including bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances or drug, alcohol or solvent misuse. Sometimes, however, they may be due to child abuse. No list of symptoms can be exhaustive, but below are a number of possible indicators of abuse.

School will always seek advice and clarity from the CPSS who will advise if additional advice from PSNI or Social Services is required.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Physical

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple bruising or bizarre markings on the skin• Multiple bruising at different stages of resolution• Bruising and or lacerations around the mouth• Finger and thumb marks on the face or body• Black eyes (particularly when both are affected)• Burns, scalds or bites which appear to have been caused by adults.• Untreated injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-destructive tendencies• Improbable excuses given to explain injuries.• Chronic runaway• Aggressive or withdrawn.• Fear of returning home• Reluctant to have physical contact.• Clothing inappropriate to weather – worn to hide part of the body.

Neglect

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constant hunger• Poor state of clothing /personal hygiene• Untreated medical problems• Emaciation / distended stomach• Constant tiredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tiredness, listlessness• Lack of social relationships• Compulsive stealing, begging or scavenging.• Frequently absent or late• Low self-esteem

Emotional

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sudden Speech• Signs of self-mutilation• Signs of solvent abuse (eg. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness)• Wetting and /or soiling• Attention seeking disorder.• Poor per relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neurotic behaviour (eg. rocking, hair twisting, thumb-sucking)• Reluctance for parent liaison• Fear of new situations• Chronic runaway• Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations

Sexual

<u>Physical Indicators</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soreness or bleeding in the genital or anal areas or in the throat• Torn, stained or bloody underclothes.• Chronic ailments such as stomach pains or headaches• Difficulty in walking or sitting.• Frequent urinary or yeast infections• Venereal diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be chronically depressed / suicidal.• Inappropriately seductive or precocious• Sexually explicit language• Low self-esteem, devaluation, lack of confidence• Recurring nightmares/fear of the dark• Outbursts of anger/hysteria• Overly protective to siblings

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is defined as:- ‘threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.’

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological

- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

<u>Physical Indicators:</u>	<u>Behavioural Indicators:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stomach pain • Physiological – stress / nerves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervousness • Low self-worth • Disturbed sleep patterns • Nightmares / flashbacks • Bed wetting • Immature / needy behaviour • Temper tantrums • Aggression • Internalising distress or withdrawal • Truancy • Alcohol and drugs

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.

HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern and issues to be addressed through the school's positive behaviour policy but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred. Harmful sexual behaviour is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when:

- there is no informed consent by the victim; and/or
- the perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim. Harmful sexual behaviour can include:
 - Using age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases.
 - Inappropriate touching.
 - Using sexual violence or threats.
 - Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older - particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not.
 - However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them - for example, if the older child is disabled.

The CPSS will advise if additional advice from PSNI or Social Services is required.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

FGM is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland. If a member of staff in St. MacNissi's has a concern that a child or young person may be at **immediate** risk of FGM, this should be reported to the PSNI without delay. If there is a concern that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, a referral will be made to the relevant Health and Social Care Trust.

FORCED MARRIAGE:

A Forced Marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Forced Marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland, and if a member of staff in St. MacNissi's has knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person, they should contact the PSNI immediately.

GENDER IDENTITY

Young people from the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual or Transgender community in Northern Ireland may face particular difficulties which could make them more vulnerable to harm. These difficulties could range from intolerance and homophobic bullying from others to difficulties for the young person themselves in exploring and understanding their sexuality. At such times young people may be more vulnerable to predatory advances from adults seeking to exploit or abuse them. This could impede a young person's ability or willingness to raise concerns if they feel they are at risk, or leave young people exposed to contact with people who would exploit them.

Professionals in St. MacNissi's, working with young people from the LGBT community, should support them to appropriately access information and support on healthy relationships and to report any concerns or risks of abuse or exploitation.

ONLINE SAFETY

Online safety means acting and staying safe when engaging in the online world. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, sexting between individuals in a relationship, making comments on social media posts, social environments, and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. It is appreciated that schools cannot cover every scenario and that parents have the primary responsibility for the protection and safeguarding of their children. It is recommended that schools, so far as is reasonably possible, engage with parents to share information, advice and guidance on the appropriate and safe use of digital technology. At St. MacNissi's the following strategies are employed to safeguard our children.

- Safety Internet week
- Workshops and presentations for both Parents and pupils.
- Use of outside agencies.
- Use of the Safer School App.

Record Keeping

The Board of Governors of St MacNissi's P.S. ensure that the arrangements operated by the school for the retention, management and release of public records comply with statutory requirements, including data protection legislation, most recently the new Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). GDPR provides a legal framework for keeping everyone's personal data safe by requiring organisations to have robust processes in place for handling and storing personal information.

Safe Handling Use of Reasonable Force

The underpinning principles of safe handling and the use of reasonable force are that these should be in line with the rights of the child under the UNCRC and should never be used as a punitive measure, i.e., as a form of punishment. (Please reference our Safe handling use of Reasonable Force Policy)

ADDRESSING BULLYING

Procedures for addressing incidents of bullying behaviour in the Pre-School

Pre-School children rarely engage in bullying. Aggressive behaviour can emerge as normal behaviour in 2/3-year-olds, with temper tantrums being part of normal development at this stage. In children with delays in other areas of development- e.g. speech and language, there can be resulting secondary behaviour management difficulties. Therefore, in the Pre-School, while bullying as such is not in evidence, there may be examples of bullying types of behaviour displayed by some children. This is usually of a physical nature and may include hitting, kicking or damage to property.

If this occurs Pre-School staff will put in place some, or all, of the following procedures, as appropriate.

- Staff will intervene to stop unacceptable behaviour
- The child will be removed from the situation
- The child will be told why he/she is being removed.
- The child will be given an alternative, calming activity with a member of staff constantly monitoring his/her behaviour. If he/she remains aggressive, he/she will be told that he/she can go back to play when he/she calms down.
- When completed, the child will be encouraged to play elsewhere and any appropriate behaviour that occurs will be praised and reinforced. Other staff will be encouraged to do likewise.
- After the event, the child will be talked to about his/her behaviour and why it was unacceptable.

More appropriate alternatives will be discussed.

- If this occurs regularly, parents will be informed and a written record, detailing incidents will be kept.

Signs such as those described above, and others, can do no more than give rise to concern – they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. Pre-school staff should be aware of the possible implications of, and alert to, all such signs particularly if they appear in combination or are regularly repeated. Where a member of staff is concerned that abuse may have occurred, he / she must report this immediately to the Designated Teacher, following the school's guidelines on the identification and reporting of suspected abuse.

The Pre-School has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. Our Child Protection Policy complements and supports a range of other policies and guidance, within the Primary School including:-

- Attendance Policy.
- Behaviour Management and Discipline / Positive Behaviour Policy.
- Pastoral Care.
- Addressing Bullying Policy.
- Safe Handling.

- Special Educational Needs.
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education.
- Intimate Care.
- E-Safety Policy.
- Educational Visits.
- Staff Code of Conduct.
- Whistle blowing.

All policies and guidance are reviewed and kept up to date, with regular risk assessments carried out where required. Relevant policies are available on the school website and all policies are available to parents with hard copies available on request.

Operation Encompass

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of the school safeguarding team. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 'Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools' and a note will be made in the child's child protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

Further information sees [The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022.](#)

REFERRAL AND THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

He/she should not investigate – this is a matter for social services and/or PSNI –but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher, discuss the matter with her, make full notes (signing and dating them), and hand the note to the Designated Teacher.

The DT will discuss the matter with the E.A. Child Protection team as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action and ensure that written records of decisions are made.

The DT, in consultation with the E.A. Child Protection Team 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/vulnerable adult may be at risk of significant harm, the nursery is obliged to make a referral to Social Services. Unless there are concerns that a parent/ guardian may be the possible abuser, the parents / guardians will be informed immediately.

No decisions to refer a child to social services will be made without full consideration and on appropriate advice. **The safety of the child is our first priority.**

Where there are concerns about possible abuse of a child, the DT will inform: Social Services – using the regional UNOCINI template (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland).

If it concerns a school pupil, the Designated Teacher for Child Protection at the school where the child is a registered pupil, and the E.A's Designated Officer for Child Protection where appropriate.

The UNOCINI referral will be made in respect of concerns about **children** within 24 hours of the initial telephone referral to social services. **(This will be done in an envelope marked 'CONFIDENTIAL – CHILD PROTECTION.**

Contact Numbers

Contacts Child Protection Support Service:- 028 9598 5590 and operates from Monday to Friday from 9.00 am until 4.30 pm.

- **South-Eastern Early Years Team Tel:- 028 93 315112**
- **Single Point of Contact (SPOC Tel: - 028 90259299 or 101x302299)**
- **Regional Emergency Social Work Service Calls Tel:- 028 95049999**
- **Safeguard Gateway Team Tel:- 028 93 340165**
- **PSNI at the Public Protection Unit Tel:- 0845600 8000**

Child Protection:-Responding appropriately to ‘Suspicious of Abuse’

If you have a concern about the safety of your child or another child, you may report your concerns to the Pre-School teacher:-**Mrs P. McCorry**

The matter will be dealt with and, if possible, resolved.

Mrs P. McCorry will monitor/observe the child in question and will respond, indicating a proposed course of action.

In cases where it is felt a child is in immediate danger the Pre-School teacher will report these concerns to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection on the management committee:-

Mrs P. McCorry/ Mr J McAuley (028 90 342166)

or in their absence, The Deputy Designated Teacher:

Mrs Mitchell (028 90 342166)

If deemed necessary the designated teacher will refer to:-

- **Single Point of Contact (SPOC Tel:- 028 90259299 or 101x30229)**
- **South-Eastern Early Years Team (Social Worker) (028 93 315112)**

While it may be necessary to share concerns and complaints, we at St MacNissi's Pre-School will proceed in a confidential manner and only those who need to know will be informed. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have a concern or complaint. **We all have a duty of care to protect children**, and their welfare must always be our priority.

The person (s) who reported the concern will be informed that the matter is being dealt with.

For all other information please view whole school policy on:-
www.saintmacnissis.com

Procedure, where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the Pre-School's staff.

Tell the Designated teacher of the management committee **Mr. J. McAuley** or in his absence the Deputy Designated teacher **Mrs R. Mitchell**

The matter will be dealt with and, if possible, resolved.
The Designated teacher will keep a written record at every stage, whether a referral is made or not.

If a referral is necessary, or if doubts remain, advice will be sought **Social Services Gateway Team (0300 1234 333)**

On advice from **Gateway Team** consider precautionary suspension / remove from direct contact duties.

If suspension is necessary, this will be done in consultation with the:-
Chairperson of the Management Committee.

Tell the complainant

Advise Early Years Team

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For all other information please view whole school policy on:-
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GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

CONFIDENTIALITY

- No promise of confidentiality can or should ever be given where abuse is alleged
- Staff have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies.
- All staff should recognise, therefore, that in order to protect children from harm, confidentiality must be subordinated to the need to take appropriate action, by involving others in the child's best interest.

DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

- A child may quite innocently disclose details of abuse that occurs within the family or other situations. It is also the case that children with experience of abuse may unburden themselves to a member of staff as the one adult they can trust.
- It is vital that the member of staff in whom a child has chosen to confide is sympathetic and supportive.
- The member of staff should remain calm and reassuring. Children who have suffered abuse may have low self-esteem or may withdraw if they detect signs of doubt or revulsion – *Reassure*.
- The member of staff must not promise to keep secret what the child has said and it must be explained to the child that his or her disclosure must be reported.
- The member of staff should listen carefully and quietly but should never attempt to cross-examine the child or press for information.
- Care must be taken in asking questions and interpreting children's responses.
- Staff should be aware that the way in which they talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings.
- They should not ask questions, which can later be construed as leading questions. This can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind.
- They should, therefore, not ask questions which encourage the child to change his or her version of events in any way, or which impose the adult's own assumptions. For example, staff should say, "Tell me what happened", rather than, "Did they do X to you"? (a leading question)

- The chief task at this stage is to listen to the child , and not to interrupt if he or she is freely recalling significant events. – **Receive**
- A note of the discussion should be made immediately after the discussion has taken place, itemising what the child has said. – **Record**

The record should indicate:

- The information revealed by the child, quoting his or her words, where possible**
- To whom the suspicions were reported**
- Date, time and signature**

- No attempt should be made to discuss concerns or fears with the parents or indeed with anyone who is not involved with the care of the child. If the child’s allegations prove to be untrue, reporting them to someone who is not concerned with the care of the child may be deemed to be defamatory.
- You must keep a copy of your report and immediately pass a copy to the Designated Teacher, Mr McAuley, in his absence to the Deputy Designated Teacher Mrs Mitchell. No copies should be kept in electronic form. – **Report**
- The Designated Teacher, Mr McAuley, or in his absence, Mrs Mitchell must always be informed even if the abuse is merely suspected.
- Signs of physical injury observed should be described in details, or sketched, but under no circumstances should a child’s clothing be removed.
- Staff should also be aware that their note of the discussion may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings.

RECEIVE & REASSURE

RECORD & REPORT

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

- At St. MacNissi's all staff must safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in their charge. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and their behaviour towards children in their care must be above reproach. The Code of Conduct is not intended to discourage positive interaction between staff and pupils but assist staff in respect of the complex issue of Child Abuse. The following guidance on appropriate conduct is designed to reduce the risk of allegations being made against any member of staff.
- All staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.
- All staff must be aware of the dangers which arise from private interviews with individual pupils. There are occasions when confidential interviews must take place, but such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people. It is inadvisable to spend undue amounts of time with one pupil, away from other people.
- All staff need to be aware of the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with pupils, and must bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued. On rare occasions, a teacher might have to restrain a pupil physically, to prevent him / her causing injury to herself or others or to property. In such instances, no more than the minimum necessary force should be used.
- There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance, which may include physical comforting, such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use discretion in such cases.
- Members of staff should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse, such as persistent sarcasm, verbal bullying or severe and persistent negative comment or actions. Members of staff should be encouraged to reflect on any aspect of their contact with children which may give rise to perceptions or allegations of this form of abuse.
- Members of staff should be particularly careful when supervising children in a residential setting such as a school trip, outdoor education camp or an extended visit away from home, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where teachers may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment. A risk assessment will be carried out before class trips.
- If in an emergency, staff have to administer First Aid, they should ensure where possible that other children or another adult are present, if staff have any doubts as to whether necessary physical contact in the circumstances could be misunderstood.
- No member of staff should hesitate to provide First Aid in an emergency because another person is not present.

- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his / her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal of the school. This would apply especially in a case where a teacher had been obliged to restrain a child physically to prevent him / her from inflicting injury to others or self injury.
 - Staff must not under any circumstances use corporal punishment such as hitting. If there is a serious problem of such misbehaviour and the member of staff cannot deal with the situation they should bring the pupil(s) to the Principal / Vice-Principal.
 - Staff must never keep suspicions of abuse or inappropriate behaviour by a colleague to themselves. If there is an attempted cover-up, staff should be aware that they could be implicated.
 - Staff should be aware when using teaching materials of a sensitive nature, especially sex education programmes.
 - Staff should not use unsuitable Video / DVD films / programmes. If members of staff are in doubt they should consult the Principal.
 - If any allegations are made against a member of staff, details must be recorded and reported to the Principal immediately.
 - If a colleague is suspected of inappropriate behaviour or abuse, it is essential that this is reported to the Principal / V-Principal.
 - All teaching and non-teaching staff will be vetted by the employing authorities. The school will vet all volunteers. Everyone will be required to complete an Access NI Check. This is to ensure that those who become part of the school community do not pose a threat to the health and well-being of our pupils.
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- Policy Reviewed:- September 2024
 - Signed: Mrs R. Mitchell (Chair of Management Committee)