

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## ST. MICHAELS SCHOOL

### Introductory Statement

This policy has been agreed in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines. Mindful of this primary duty of care, the Board of Management of St. Michael's School fully endorses "Children First", the designated guidelines for the protection and welfare of children as issued by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2017 and "Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures" from the Department of Education and Science, 2017. The Board fully endorses arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in Circulars from the Department of Education and Science.

In accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools,

- Every registered teacher as a Mandated Person, now has a statutory obligation to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).
- There is a requirement on mandated persons to assist Tusla in the assessment of child protection risk, if so requested.

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

- (a) **Prevention** –curriculum provision/stay safe and themes
- (b) **Procedures**-procedure for dealing with concern disclosures/cf guidelines.
- (c) **Practice**-best practice in child protection

It should be read in conjunction with the following and other relevant documents where appropriate:

- Code of Conduct
- Anti - Bullying Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Health and Safety Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- AUP Policy Re: Online safety
- **RSE Policy**

### This policy aims to:

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment.
- Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school at an appropriate level.
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community.
- Put in place procedures for good practice.
- Ensure that all staff members are aware of and receive training in Child Protection and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse.
- Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas.

## Key Points:

The staff and Management of this School have agreed that:

- All concerns/disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the Designated Liaison Person.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality is vital. Information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a need to know basis.
- The principal will be informed and some instances will involve the Chairperson of the Board of Management (e.g. in relation to allegations about the behaviour of staff).
- **Online CPD training will be undertaken every three years.**

## Statutory Obligations

The Board of Management will fulfil its statutory obligations in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools 2017 as follows:

- a. Ensure, as far as practicable, that children are *safe from harm* while availing of the school's services (i.e. while attending the school or while participating in school activities).
- b. Carry out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child where they are attending the school or while they are participating in school activities.
- c. Prepare and display a written *Child Safeguarding Statement* in accordance with the requirement of the Act.
- d. Appoint a "relevant person" as the first point of contact in respect of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement.
- e. Provide a copy of the Child safeguarding Statement to school members of school personnel and, where requested, to parents, members of the public and to Tusla.

## Curriculum Provision

The Stay Safe Programme is the primary resource used in this school to inform teachers planning for education on abuse prevention and is part of the schools' SPHE curriculum. RSE is delivered with parental consent as appropriate bi-annually. A commitment to the principles of Children First permeates the culture of the school.

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

## Responsibility to Report: All staff ( best practice)

Any person who suspects a child/student is being abused, has a responsibility to report the Designated Liaison person or an assisting DLP

## Designated Liaison Protection Officers:

The D.L.P. Officer:

Bernadette Finnerty

Principal

The Deputy D.L.P. Officer:

Jacinta Connellan

Deputy Principal



The following may contribute as grounds for concern:

- A specific indication from a child that he/she was abused.
- A statement from the person that witnessed the abuse.
- Illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.
- A symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence.
- Consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective signs of abuse, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion, or reasonable grounds for concern.

If a child makes a disclosure about themselves or another child then follow the below guidelines:

- Do not over-react
- Comfort and reassure the child
- Do not promise to keep the disclosure a secret. Instead, explain that it is so important that you may need to discuss it with another important person
- Do not ask leading questions or try to probe the child for further information
- Allow the child time to talk
- As soon as possible report the disclosure to the Designated Liaison Person

#### Procedure to be followed:

- If an employee has concerns regarding a student he/she should speak privately with the D.L.P. The DLP will contact TUSLA and seek appropriate advice from the duty social worker.
- The D.L.P. will act on advice i.e. monitor or report in writing.
- The D.L.P. will report back to person who made the report.

If formal reporting is necessary, the standard form for reporting must be completed and returned to TUSLA. Also, parent(s) will be informed. The above procedures are outlined in Child Protection Procedures 2017.

#### **Responsibility to Report: Mandated Staff**

Observe the same procedures as above with additional statutory responsibility as outlined in Circular 81/2017.

Emergency Cases: In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and a duty social worker is unavailable, Garda Síochána should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Health Board intervention.

#### Additional factors relevant to St. Michael's School

Since this is a special school and pupils may not be in a position to disclose or understand their experiences staff need to be vigilant in their observation of students. Monitoring of well being may support this observation.

#### **Where an allegation is made against a school employee:**

- The Chairman, as the employer, will be informed.
- The employee will be informed subject to guidelines and required to leave the premises.
- Legal advice may be sought.

**Oversight**

St Michael's School will maintain a record of oversight and compliance.

A copy of this policy document will be accessible in school.

Signed: Clare Kelly.  
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Review Date: 27/9/2022