

Whole School Implementation of the Child Protection Procedures

The Whole School Environment

‘The sheer normality, routine and safety of school may be powerfully therapeutic for a vulnerable child.’

School can be ‘an ally for children, a guarantor of basic protection, a capacity builder, a secure place from which to explore themselves and the world, an integrator into community and culture, a gateway to adult opportunities’ Prof.R Gilligan

The Whole School Environment

Teachers can act as listeners, confidants and positive role models for a child

The alertness of a school can protect a child from mistreatment and harm

Schools provide boundaries, enabling children to develop confidence and a sense of belonging

Schools can be a refuge from neglectful or abusive home environments

Curricular Provision

Children learn about health and well being through programmes like Stay Safe, SPHE and RSE.

Stay Safe gives children the skills to resist victimisation and teaches them to tell an adult if they feel unsafe

At post primary level the Emotional Health, RSE and Personal Safety modules are particularly relevant to child protection, as is Sen Cycle RSE.

Communication

The whole school community should be aware of the school's child protection policy and procedures – members of the Board, students, parents, and all school personnel

It is the responsibility of the DLP to ensure this happens

Students

Students need to know:

- What abuse is
- The school has procedures in place to help them
- They should confide in someone if they are in difficulty of any kind
- There are limits to confidentiality: if they are at risk a teacher is obliged to pass this on

Parents

Parents need to know about the Procedures and the obligations of school personnel under them.

If the DLP is referring a concern to the HSE, parents should be aware that he/she is not making an allegation

Open communication between school and parents is in the best interests of the child

Parent information leaflet is in folder and on DES/SPHE websites

School Personnel are Required To:

- Have a good understanding of the procedures
- Be aware of the possibility of abuse
- Know the signs and symptoms of abuse
- Know the limits of confidentiality and be able to explain these to students
- Know how to deal with disclosures
- Record concerns accurately and objectively
- Pass on concerns in writing to the DLP

Recording Concerns or Disclosures

A written record is essential if there are concerns about child abuse or neglect

School personnel shall note carefully what they saw and heard, using the child's own words where possible

Physical injuries shall be described in detail, and if appropriate, sketched

The record shall be signed, dated and given to the DLP who shall retain it.

Recording Concerns

Keeping a record over time can help to build up a picture of a child

There is a difference between recording observations or concerns and making an allegation

Written records should avoid conjecture or speculation

Language used should be neutral and impartial

Examples of Poor Report Writing

- He said he got the mark from a fall but it looked to me like he'd been punched
- There was a cigarette burn on her arm
- I asked him if his father had beaten others in the family
- I didn't consult with the parents because they are violent
- She told me the man had touched her breasts but I had the impression more had happened

Recording Objectively

- He said he got the mark from a fall. There was a round blue and red mark on his cheek
- There was a small round wound on her hand that was dark at the edges
- I asked him if there was anything else he wanted to tell me
- I didn't consult with the parents because they had been verbally and physically abusive to the principal on...
- She said the man had touched her breasts. She looked afraid and said she didn't want to say any more.

Safety and Welfare of Staff

Staff are advised to maintain professional boundaries at all times and to be familiar with:

- The school's Code of Behaviour (see 6.3.4)
- Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct
- JMB/IVEA/ACCS Professional Behaviour Guidelines
- Irish Sports Council Code of Ethics

Boundaries

The teacher's relationship with students should at all times be professional, respectful and appropriate

Teachers act in loco parentis: the duty of care is that which a careful and responsible parent would exercise

Particular care re text / email / facebook / twitter etc., communication with students

Teacher/Student Relationships

These are a breach of trust, unethical and not permissible in any circumstances

Where a student acts inappropriately management must act quickly and firmly to protect staff

Management must also act quickly where a member of staff may have acted inappropriately

Physical Boundaries

- Avoid any physical contact capable of being misinterpreted by student or parent
- Respect personal space and privacy
- In the case of a distressed student act responsibly as the occasion demands

One to One Situations

- Avoid where possible
- Privacy can be provided but the adult should be visible at all times
- Glass panel should not be covered
- Doors never locked
- Do not detain a student alone in an isolated part of the school; if there is a discipline issue bring him/her to central area

Dignity and Respect

- All members of the school community are entitled to dignity and respect, free from harassment, intimidation or offensive behaviour
- Re harassment the test is subjective
- Offensive language/jokes, sexual comments, racist or homophobic remarks/text messages are unacceptable

Schools Advised to Have Protocols On:

- Supervision of changing rooms/toilets
- Administering first aid
- Photography
- Searches of students or lockers
- Use of reasonable force
- School trips/residential situations

In the event of an allegation being made against a teacher he/she should contact the ASTI or TUI for support and advice

The Employee Assistance Programme offers a range of health and counselling services.

Teachers can contact Carecallwellbeing.ie 1800 411 057 24 hours a day 365 days a year