

Child Protection Policy of St. Mary's Special School

Schools have an obligation to provide students with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well-being and protect them from harm. School personnel are especially well placed to observe changes in behaviour, failure to develop or outward signs of abuse in children.

- Mindful of this primary duty of care, the Board of Management of St. Mary's Special School fully endorses "Children First", the designated guidelines for the protection and welfare of children as issued by the Department of Health and Children, September 1999 and "Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures" from the Department of Education & Science, April 2001.
- The Board nominates Kevin Toale, School Principal as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Kathleen O'Hare, as the Deputy Designated Liaison Person to act as a liaison with outside agencies such as HSE and Tusla and as a resource person to any staff having child protection concerns.
- The Board fully endorses arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in Circular 0094/2006, June 2006, for the Department of Education & Science.

- The Board will ensure that all school staff, teaching and non-teaching are aware of their obligations under the guidelines detailed in *Children First* as well as *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures*, and the procedures to be followed in the event of concern.
- The Board recognises that it has two duties of care. The primary duty is the protection, safety and welfare of the children attending St. Mary's Special School. The Board as an employer also has duties and responsibilities towards its employees.
- As an employer, the Board will seek legal advice if an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee.
- The Board will adhere to the protocol outlined in Ch. 4. Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse of School Employees, in "Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures" from the Department of Education & Science 2001, to authorise any actions required to protect the children in its care. The Board notes that school employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively. The employee should be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. The Board accepts that the principles of natural justice and fair procedures must be adhered to.
- The Board believes that the academic, personal and social development of children flourishes in a culture where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and appropriate support is available for those in difficulty.
- The Board is committed to the maintenance of the environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. All children in the school will be made aware that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried. In addition, opportunities will be included in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to keep them safe.

- School Staff and multi-disciplinary Staff will have regard to issues of confidentiality in dealing with concerns of neglect / abuse and Staff will only be informed on a 'need to know' basis.
- This policy statement regarding Child Protection at St. Mary's Special School applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers and contractors working in the school.
- St. Mary's Special School also has an 'Intimate Care Policy' which also promotes Child Protection.