



Child Protection Policy 2017 - 2018

Introductory Statement

The Principal and Board of Management of Merlin Woods Primary School have developed and agreed this current policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the followings areas:-

- a) Prevention – curriculum provision
- b) Procedures - procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- c) Practice - best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and the appended section from the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff. It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with 'Children First' and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

Aims:

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
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff
- Ensure that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the 'Children First' 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 for all school staff

Prevention

The Stay Safe programme will be the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the schools' SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

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

Learning Support /Resource Teachers, Language Teachers and Special Needs Assistants will play a support role to the Class Teacher in relation to the planning, teaching and supporting of a programme of prevention for the children in their care.

Information regarding the Stay Safe Programme will be provided to parents prior to teaching the programme and through occasional letters regarding specific aspects of the programme.

If possible we will endeavour in a situation where parents opt to withdraw their children from the Stay Safe Programme that a support teacher will schedule individual or group activities away from the main classroom during the programme. However, it must be noted that this arrangement may not always be possible.

Procedures:

As the school grows and develops, all staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Science document, 'Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures'.

The Board of Management of this school has appointed **Paula O'Connor** as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and **Elaine O'Malley** as the Deputy DLP (or Acting DLP Michelle Conneely in her absence).

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- All concerns/ disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a ‘need to know’ basis.

Practices:

The following areas have been considered by the Principal and Board of Management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the Principal and Board of Management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

a) Physical contact

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult.

While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining its appropriateness:-

- It is acceptable to the child
- It is open and not secretive
- The age and developmental stage of the child

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

b) Visitors / Guest Speakers:

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils.

c) Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs:

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting /intimate care a meeting should be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher when appointed, special needs assistant when appointed,

principal and if appropriate the pupil. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs. The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when the particular staff members involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

d) Toileting accidents:

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has an 'accident' of this nature they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change. If an occasion should arise where a staff member needs to help to clean or dress a child an additional member of staff should also be present if possible. In this situation the child's parent will be contacted and given the option to collect the child. A record of all such incidents will be kept and principal and parents will be notified.

e) One- to One teaching

Staff who find themselves in a one-to-one situation with a child will ensure that they are visible through an open door or a window. Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought.

Work being carried out by special needs assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

f) Changing for Games/ PE/ Swimming

Swimming is done in the older classes and children should be able to change themselves. Staff discretely supervision in the changing room.

g) Supervision of children

Children will be supervised at all times. Each classroom is equipped with toilets and so the pupils will not leave the classroom to use the toilet.

h) Recruitment and selection of staff

All staff are required to have Garda Vetting. The recruitment and selection of staff will be carefully considered and all applications will supply personal details, a resume of work experience and references to the school. Any volunteers working in the school will do so

under the guidance of the teachers. All applicants are asked directly if they have ever been investigated for any incidences involving child abuse.

i) Internet Safety

Acceptable Use Policy – Children’s family name and details will not be used on media.

j) Media – Parental consent is sought at enrolment to allow children be photographed or videoed by the school or media during school events.

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to principal and parents.

Links to other policy / planning areas:

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on ‘Safety and Protection’, The School Code of Behaviour

Procedures: Anti-Bullying Policy, Health and Safety Statement.

Practice: School Tours / Outings.

Review and Monitoring:

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis as per Circular 65/2011. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

See below for ratification.

DES Child Protection Policy (Appendix 1; Circular 65/2011)

Child Protection Policy of Merlin Woods Primary School

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Merlin Woods Primary School has agreed the following child protection policy:

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is **Paula O'Connor**
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is **Elaine O'Malley**, or Michelle Conneely in the absence of Paula or Elaine.
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Merlin Woods Primary School will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The school will

- recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters
- adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children; and
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

5. This section of the child protection policy should be used to list school policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to child protection (e.g. the Code of Behaviour/Anti-bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Strategy, Supervision of Pupils, Sporting Activities/School Outings/Pupil Work Placements at post primary etc.)
The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.
6. This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association (if any) and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.
7. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

Signed *Fr Martin Glynn* Date 24th October 2017

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed *Paula O'Connor* Date 24th October 2017

Principal

Appendix 2: Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of its child protection policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.

The checklist is designed as an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. Individual Boards of Management may wish to include other items in the checklist that are of particular relevance to the school in question.

As part of the overall review process, Boards of Management should also assess other school policies, practices and activities vis a vis their adherence to the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare as set out in the school's child protection policy.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes
As part of the school's child protection policy, has the Board formally adopted, without modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes
Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	Yes
Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	Yes
Has the DLP attended available child protection training?	Yes
Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	Yes
Have any members of the Board attended child protection training?	Yes (Fr Martin, Paula, Elaine, also Michelle)
Has the school's child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the Department's "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" are available to all school personnel?	Yes
Has the Board arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	Yes
Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection reports made to the HSE/An Garda Síochána by the DLP?	Yes
Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report to the HSE was made?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the HSE/ An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed?	Yes
Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the Parents' Association (if any), has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the school's child protection policy is available to parents on request?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the Stay Safe programme is implemented in full in the school? (applies to primary schools)	Yes

Has the Board ensured that the SPHE curriculum is implemented in full in the school?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements for Garda Vetting have been met in respect of all school personnel (employees and volunteers)?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the Department's requirements in relation to the provision of a child protection related statutory declaration and associated form of undertaking have been met in respect of persons appointed to teaching and non-teaching positions?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that, from a child protection perspective, thorough recruitment and selection procedures are applied by the school in relation to all school personnel (employees and volunteers)?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' are being fully and adequately implemented by the school?	Yes
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's child protection policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	Yes (eg we added examples of non-leading vs leading questions)
Has the Board put in place an action plan containing appropriate timelines to address those aspects of the school's child protection policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement ?	Yes – now completed
Has the Board ensured that any areas for improvement that that were identified in any previous review of the school's child protection policy have been adequately addressed?	Yes

Signed *Fr Martin Glynn* Date 24th October 2017
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed *Paula O'Connor* Date 24th October 2017
Principal

**Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the child
protection policy**

To Whom It May Concern,

The Board of Management of Merlin Woods Primary School wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's child protection policy was last completed at the Board meeting of 24th October 2017.
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 2 of the Department's 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'

Signed **Fr Martin Glynn** Date 24th October 2017

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed **Paula O'Connor** Date 24th October 2017

Principal

Child Protection Guidelines Checklist for School Employees

Designated Liaison Person: Paula O'Connor

Deputy Designated Liaison Person: Elaine O'Malley, or Michelle Conneely in her absence

If a child discloses information to you:-

- Listen
- Do not ask leading questions (see examples below of leading vs non-leading questions)
- Offer reassurance but do not promise not to tell
- Explain that other adults may need to be told - DLP
- Do not stop the child speaking
- Do not over react or comment
- Inform DLP - If you have a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern that a child is at risk or has suffered abuse, the DLP should contact the Health Board for advice
- **At the earliest opportunity, record accurately what the child has said – Using the child's own words. Record date/time and context of the disclosure. Use child's registration number – Not child's name**
- Facts only
- Sketch signs of physical injury if appropriate
- Retain records for a period of 21 years in keeping with the school's Record Keeping Policy

The following should also be reported to the DLP:

- An account from a person who saw a child being abused
- Injury consistent with abuse
- Dysfunctional behaviour
- Implausible explanations for injury or behaviour
- Consistent evidence over a period of time that a child is being emotionally or physically neglected

Health Board Response:

- School is asked to monitor the situation
- Formal report is requested , sent by DLP and on receipt case is allocated to Social Worker
- Preliminary enquiry – Screening process
- Initial assessment

Possible outcomes:

- Case closed
- Family support
- Child Protection Plan (usually following a case conference)

Examples of Non- Leading Questions/ what you can ask:

Would you like to tell me about what happened?

Would you like to tell me more?

I'd like to help, can you tell me about how you got that mark you told me about?

Etc.

With non-leading questions, you are opening up the conversation for the child, that they can tell you more and share if they are worried or disclose something that has happened.

Examples of Leading Questions/ DO NOT ASK:

Did X hit you?

Was it X who did that?

Were X and Y fighting, is that what happened?

Etc.

Leading questions direct the child into responding a certain way, possibly in a way they think you want to hear, and therefore may give wrong or misleading information. Do not ask these sort of questions.

NB: If recording a sketch to assist with size, shape, location, etc, please also make you include a written comment to ensure clarity on the generic picture.

Eg back of the left arm, front left leg. Alternatively, include a photograph of the injury.

