

## **Child Protection Policy of Bodyke N.S.**

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 Bodyke N.S. 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 Susan Neylon.
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Eadaoin Ryan.
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Bodyke N.S. 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. Certain policies such as our Code of Behaviour/Anti-bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Policy and the Supervision of Pupils Policy are linked to this Child Protection Policy. This policy will also be considered with reference to the participation by pupils in sporting activities, other extra-curricular activities and school outings. Other practices and activities, where child protection might have particular relevance, will take due consideration of the procedures outlined within this policy. 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.

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6. This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association 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.

### **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

The Principal Susan Neylon, appointed by the BoM, is the DLP. Eadaoin Ryan is the deputy DLP. The DLP and deputy DLP together with the rest of the staff and board of management will attend training where available.

The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all correspondence with Health Boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of child abuse should be processed through the DLP.

### **Confidentiality**

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child. The giving of information to those who need to have that information is not a breach of confidentiality. This procedure exists for the protection of a child who may have been or has been abused. The DLP who is submitting a report to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/guardian, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or place that child at further risk. A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

In emergency situations, where the Health Board cannot be contacted, and the child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána should be contacted immediately. A child should not be left in a dangerous situation pending Health Board intervention.

### **Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse**

The protection for persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of an Garda Síochána.

### **Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

**Neglect** can be defined in terms of an *omission*, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

### **Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse**

A list of child abuse indicators is contained in Appendix 1 'Children First'. This policy draws particular attention to 'persistent evidence' of neglect, including indicators such as no lunch, lack of uniform, no homework, poor attendance, persistent health problems, lack of sleep indicating inappropriate television viewing late at night and other evidence that would indicate lack of supervision in the home. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse:

1. Considering the possibility
2. Looking out for signs of abuse
3. Recording of information

### **Handling Disclosures from Children**

The Staff would deal with each situation sensitively, reassure the child but not to make promises that cannot be fulfilled.

The adult should not ask leading questions or make suggestions. They should explain that further help may have to be sought. The discussion should then be recorded accurately.

The record should include reference to what was observed with sketches of physical injury where necessary. It should also record when the alleged incident took place. Records should be kept in a secure place. The information should then be conveyed to the school DLP.

If the reporting person and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures as outlined in 'Children First' will be adhered to. Standardised reporting forms should be used. The Chairperson of the BoM will be informed before the DLP makes contact with the relevant authorities.

### **Allegations or Suspicions in relation to School Employees**

The Chairperson and the DLP are primarily concerned with the protection of the children in their care. However, employees must be protected against false and malicious claims.

Legal Advice should be sought by the board in relation to the employee. If the allegation is against the DLP, the BoM Chairperson will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

## **Reporting**

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should act in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Child Protection guidelines. A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. A parent/guardian may make a statement on behalf of a child. The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the BoM.

School employees, other than the DLP, who receive allegations against another school employee, should immediately report the matter to the DLP. School employees who form suspicions regarding conduct of another school employee should consult with the DLP. The procedures outlined in 'Child Protection' should be referred to.

The Chairperson and the DLP should make the employee aware privately:

- a. That an allegation has been made against him/her
- b. Of the nature of the allegation
- c. Whether or not the Health Board or Gardaí has been informed.

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. The employee should be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the BoM within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, Health Board and legal advisers.

The Chairperson must take the necessary steps to protect the child and may consult the BoM in this matter. The BoM may direct that the employee take administrative leave with pay and avoid suspension, thus removing any implication of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed.

## **School Measures Taken to Protect the Children in Our Care**

There are a number of areas where common sense in our school should prevail in order to protect the children in the school and the staff who care for them. In relation to this, certain points should be noted:

1. Bodyke N.S. will fully implement the Stay Safe programme
2. A copy of the school's child protection policy, which includes the names of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP, will be made available to all school personnel and is readily accessible to parents on request.
3. The name of the DLP and other relevant support services are displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school

4. In addition to informing the school authority of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made.

5. Bodyke N.S. will undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and its implementation by the school. Staff who take classes swimming should make sure that there are two adults in attendance in the changing areas at all times. The dressing rooms and pool area should be well supervised.

- Staff should not be alone in a classroom with one child where possible or detain a child on their own after school. In the case of special needs pupils where resource hours and assistance are sanctioned on an individual basis, it is school policy that staff in such a situation should work with the classroom door open or shutters up thus rendering the occupants visible at all times
- When possible children should work in groups
- Children with physical disabilities who may require assistance in toiletry matters will be aided by a Special Needs Assistant who has met the necessary screening requirements when being employed by the school.

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 \_\_\_\_\_[date]

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Child Protection Practices**

The staff and BoM of this school have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to Child Protection. Following discussion and consultation, the staff and BoM have agreed that the following practices be adopted:

- 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.

All media products (CDs, DVDs etc. should be checked for their appropriateness with regard to age and suitability.

### **Visitors/Guest Speakers**

Visitors/Guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school principal has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker.

### **Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs**

- In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care, a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, 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 involved are absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file
- A designated member of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

### **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 the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents/guardians cannot be contacted, the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In all such situations, two members of staff should be present. A record of all such incidents will be kept and Principal and parents will be notified.

### **Accidents**

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our Incident book and will be addressed under our Accident Policy as part of Health and Safety.

### **On-to-one teaching**

- It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child
- Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment
- 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.

### **Changing for games/ PE / Swimming**

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for Games/ PE/ Swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal area and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/ volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required, the parents/guardians of the child will be asked to assist the child. Bodyke N.S. will endeavour to have as many parents as possible to assist with changing at swimming sessions particularly in the case of younger pupils. In the case of games only female volunteers/parents or coaches will have a presence in the girls changing room while girls are changing clothes etc.

### **Attendance**

Our school attendance will be monitored as per our attendance policy. With regards to child protection, we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

### **Behaviour**

Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

### **Bullying**

Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our Anti-Bullying policy. If the behaviour involved is of a sexualised nature or regarded as being particularly abusive, then the matter will be referred to the DLP.

### **Children travelling in staff cars**

Members of the school staff will not carry a child alone in their cars at any time.

### **Communication**

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/Oral Language/RE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open or request a colleague to attend.



## **Induction of Pupils**

All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE, Walk Tall, Stay Safe and SPHE. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress.

## **Internet Safety**

Child protection concerns are addressed in the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

## **Supervision**

The school's supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks. A rota will be displayed to cover both breaks. Teachers return to their classes as soon as possible after break. In the event of a teacher having to leave classroom briefly the classroom door is left open. If a teacher has to leave the school urgently then the learning support teacher if available supervises their classes. Alternatively their classes are dispersed to other classrooms.

## **Visibility**

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school playground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school playground without permission.

## Appendix B

### Reporting Form for Child Protection and Welfare Concerns to a Health Board

1. Date of Report
2. Name of person reporting
3. Address of person reporting
4. Relationship of reporting person with the child concerned
5. Method of report (telephone call, personal call to office)
6. Family Details

#### Details of Child Concerned

**Surname:**

**Forename:**

**DOB:**

**Male/female:**

**Alias (known as):**

**Address:**

**Correspondence address (if different):**

**Telephone number:**

7. State whether you consider your report to indicate (a) suspected or actual child abuse or (b) need for family support, giving reasons

	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Emotional Abuse	Neglect
Suspect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Actual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Details of other family members/household members

Name	Age	Relationship to child	Employment/School	Location

In cases of emergency, or outside Health Board hours, reports should be made to An Garda Síochána.

9. Name of Other Professionals Involved with Children and/or Parents/Carers.

**Public health nurse:**

**School:**

**General practitioner:**

**Any other agency or professional involved (please describe the nature of any involvement):**

**Report Details.**

10. Describe, as fully as possible the nature of the problem or incident being reported, giving details of times and dates of individual incidents, the circumstances in which they occurred, any other persons who were present at the time, and their involvement

11. Has any explanation been offered by the child, and/or parents/carers, which would account for the current problem or incident? (Details)

12. As far as possible, describe the state of the children's physical, mental and emotional well-being.

13. If child abuse is being alleged, who is believed to be responsible for causing it?

Include (if known)

Name:

Address:

Degree of contact with child:

Degree of contact with other children:

14. Describe (in detail) any risks to which the child in this situation is/are believed to be exposed.

15. How did this information come to your attention

16. What has prompted you to report your concern at this time?

17. What evidence of harm exists at present?

18. Are there any factors in the child and/or parents/carers' present situation, which may have relevance to the current concern? (for example, recent illness, bereavement, separation, addiction, mental health problem or other difficulty)

19. Are there any factors in the child and/or parents/carers' situation which could be considered protective or helpful (for example, extended family or community support)?

20. Has any action been taken in response to the current concern or incident (Details)

21. Are the child's parents/ carers aware that this concern is being reported to the health board?

22. Is there a need for urgent protective action at this point?

23. Any other comments.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

Dear Parents/Guardians,

In recent years, as a society, we have become very aware of the problem of child abuse through neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Each one of us has a duty to protect children and Children First, the National Guidelines, for the Protection and Welfare of Children noted that teachers, who are the main care givers to children outside the family, are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse.

In response to this, the Department of Education and Skills published Guidelines and Procedures for all schools in relation to child protection and welfare. These guidelines promote the safety and welfare of all children and are to be welcomed.

The Board of Management of Bodyke N.S. has adopted these guidelines as school policy. Consequently, if school staff suspect or are alerted to possible child abuse, they are obliged to refer this matter to the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE will then assess the situation and provide support for the child concerned.

Children First, the National Guidelines for the Protection of Children may be assessed on the website of the Department of Health and Children ([www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)) and the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Guidelines can be read on the Department's website ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)). Parents/Guardians are also welcome to look through the guidelines here at the school.

Yours sincerely,

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Susan Neylon, Principal.

**Child Protection Contacts**

**Designated Liaison Person**

**Susan Neylon**

**Deputy DLP**

**Eadaoin Ryan**

**Garda Station**

**Telephone:**

**Local Contact For**

**'The Children and Family Social Services of the HSE'**

**TELEPHONE:**

**Address:**