



**Scoil Easpaig Uí Artaigh**

Baile an Fhraoigh

Aonach Urmhumhan

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**CHILD**  
**PROTECTION**  
**POLICY**



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### **Introductory Statement**

The Board of Management of Bishop Harty National School 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.

Bishop Harty National School seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. We strive to create a happy, safe environment for the children where they feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect and they will be acted upon with sensitivity. In its policies, practices and activities, Bishop Harty National 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: Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the BOM of Bishop Harty National School has agreed the following child protection policy.

This policy has been developed and agreed in line with:

- Circular 65/2011 - 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' (DES)



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- 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (Dept of Children and Youth Affairs)
- Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES)

**Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Tamara Hogan (Principal).**  
**The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Joanne Butler.**

An individual copy of this policy and the appended guidelines from the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff.

#### **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.
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#### **Definition of Child Abuse**

Bishop Harty N.S. has adopted the definition of child abuse as described in the “Children First Guidelines”. The “Children First Guidelines” define child abuse by using four categories: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and 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. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific moment.

The school will be alert and vigilant around the following signs of neglect:

- Children presenting with a series of minor or frequent injuries who may not be having their needs met for supervision and safety outside the school
- Children whose ongoing failure to gain weight or who’s height is significantly below average because of deprivation of adequate nutrition
- Children who consistently miss school and are being deprived of intellectual stimulation

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

**Emotional Abuse:** is normally to be found in the relationship between the caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child’s need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child’s behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning.

This is normally to be found in the relationship between caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child’s need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child’s behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. The school will be alert and vigilant around the following signs of emotional abuse.



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Examples of emotional abuse of children include:

- the imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
- unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- under- or over-protection of the child;
- failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- exposure to domestic violence

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

**Physical Abuse:** is any form of non-accidental injury which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

The school will be alert and vigilant around the following signs of physical abuse:

- Children presenting with a series of minor injuries who may not be having their needs met for supervision and safety outside the school
- children exposed to excessive force in handling
- Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- Children exposed to a substantial risk of significant harm



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- Children presenting with signs of having been shaken, deliberate poisoning or attempted suffocation.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's physical safety and protection are considered to be at significant risk.

**Sexual Abuse:** occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

The school will be alert and vigilant around signs of sexual abuse. Examples of child sexual abuse include:

- exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse.
- consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

Each of these categories is defined in full in Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) pp. 8-9.



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

- A) Prevention – curriculum provision
- B) Procedures – procedures for dealing with concerns/disclosures
- C) Practice - best practice in child protection

#### **A. PREVENTION**

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used 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.

On enrolment of their child parents will be informed that the Stay Safe Programme is in use in the school and a copy of the Stay Safe 'A Parent's Guide' provided.

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

#### **B. PROCEDURES**

##### ***Procedures for dealing with a disclosure /suspicion from a child / third party.***

All staff (teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking, cleaning, yard supervisors 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 Ms Deirdre Boland as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Ms Joanne Butler as the deputy (DLP).

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.

Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making the report. A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.



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- Teachers who suspect child abuse should report their concerns to the Designated Liaison Person at the first instance and carefully record their observations over a period of time.
- Disclosure of child abuse from a third party will be reported to the DLP. If a third party starts to tell a teacher about an alleged child abuse incident the teacher will ask them to speak to the DLP. If the person does not inform the DLP the teacher will do so.
- Where a child discloses alleged abuse to a staff member, the person receiving that information should listen carefully and supportively. Great care must be taken not to abuse the child's trust. This should not be a formal interview.
  1. Listen to the child.
  2. Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child.
  3. Offer reassurance but do not make promises.
  4. Do not stop a child recalling significant events
  5. Do not over re-act.
  6. Confidentially should be assured – explain that further help may have to be sought.
  7. Record the discussion accurately noting:
    - What, where and when?
    - Descriptions and possible sketches of physical injuries
    - Explanations of injuries using direct quotations if appropriate
    - Sign and date the record.
    - Retain the record securely.
- Whether cases of abuse are suspected or confirmed, confidentiality will be respected. The information on individual cases will be restricted to the teacher's immediately involved with the child and will be on a need to know basis.
- The DLP will record the incident. It is not the function of the teacher or the DLP to investigate the issue.



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- If the suspected abuser is the DLP then the suspicion and any record will be passed on the Chairperson who will proceed as per guidelines.
- The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed of the disclosure.
- Informal contact with the designated person in the Mid-Western Health Board will be made, seeking advice as to whether a referral should be made. The DLP will be explicit that s/he is requesting advice and not making a report. It is not necessary at this stage for the DLP to disclose his/her name or the name of the school.
- The advice given by the Health Board must be acted upon.
- If the advice is not to refer, the DLP will record this advice as the reason for non-referral. The Chairperson of the BOM will be informed.
- If the advice of the Health Board is to refer the case, the DLP will do so. However, prior to referring, the DLP will inform the parent of his/her intention to refer, unless this course of action is injurious to the child.
- Following referral and the completion of the standard form, the school will have no further part to play in the investigation
- If a case conference is required, the DLP will be invited to attend.
- All records will be held in a securely locked location.

#### **Allegations against an employee:**

- Procedures followed are similar to those of a disclosure.
- Employee is made aware of the allegations against him/her.
- Employee will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing and at a meeting of the Board of Management.
- BOM meeting to review the allegation, giving due consideration to any advice given by the Health Board and Gardai.



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- The BOM will consider placing the employee on administrative leave, with full pay, pending the outcome of the investigation by the Health Board and Gardai.
- On conclusion of any investigation the BOM will determine the employment status of the employee.

#### ***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, see 'Child Protection' (DES 2001, page 6).



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#### ***Qualified Privilege***

- People making a report to the DLP in good faith have ‘qualified privilege’ under common law, see ‘Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures’ (DES 2001, page 6). Reports made to Health Boards may be subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997. This act enables members of the public to obtain access to personal information relating to them which is in the possession of public bodies. However, the act also provides that public bodies may refuse access to information obtained by them in confidence.

#### **C. BEST PRACTISE**

The following areas have been considered by the staff and Board of Management

- In the case of Special Needs Pupils who have difficulty understanding the programme, the Learning Support Teachers /Resource Teachers will help them to understand it.
- Special effort will be made to help *non native speakers* to comprehend the content.

#### **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:**



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Visitors/Guest Speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school (principal//teacher(s)) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate.

#### **c) 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, special needs assistant, principal and if deemed necessary, the class teacher and 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.

Two members 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.

#### **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 the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change him/herself and the parent/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.

#### **e) One-to-One Teaching**



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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.

#### **f) Changing for Games/PE/ Swimming**

Pupils may be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/ PE/swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal areas 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 parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child. At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils. While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above. In the case 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.

#### **g) School Tours/Trips**

School staff accompanying children on school tours/trips (including school sporting events) will deliver a duty of care commensurate with the trip/venue. The higher the risk factor the higher the number of teachers/responsible adults involved. Hired buses/vehicles must provide safe transportation and a functioning seat belt for every child/adult.

### **Curricular Implications**

- The Stay Safe Programme will be taught every year in every class.



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- The SPHE Programme will be supported by the Walk Tall Programme and the RSE Programme.

**Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on a regular basis. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Ratified by the Board of Management on

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Signed: ..... Chairperson

Signed: ..... Principal