

Child Protection Policy



Moyallon Primary School

Introduction:

The following policy aims to set out the framework which underpins the practices within Moyallon Primary School. The school ethos is reflected in all actions and decisions taken by staff as they follow the detailed guidance set out in the SELB Child Protection Procedures, DENI Circular 1999/10, Children (NI) Order 1995 Guidance and the Southern Area Protection Committee Procedures.

General Principles:

The principles and philosophy which underpin our work are those set out in the “*UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*” (UK Agreement in 1991) and enshrined in the Children (NI) Order 1995 effective from November 1996. A major part of our responsibility will be to safeguard the children in our care from neglect and physical, sexual and emotional harm.

The following principles form the basis for effective child protection and underpin the guidance which we follow:

- Children have a right to be listened to and to be taken seriously.
- In any matter the welfare of the child must always be paramount. This overrides all other considerations.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting the child and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families: but where there is conflict the child’s interests must always come first.

Aims to be addressed through this policy document:

- To introduce procedures in the school to deal with suspected cases of child abuse as directed by Department and SELB circulars.
- To make the staff aware of the referral procedure within the school.
- To make parents aware of the procedures set up in school to deal with suspected cases of child abuse.

Procedures:

Moyallon Primary School recognises their four main responsibilities in the area of Child Protection. These are in the areas of *Prevention, Recognition, Response and Referral*. Parents will be made aware of the school’s responsibilities and procedures through a pamphlet distributed to each family and it is hoped that they will support us in our practice.

✓ Prevention:

We offer a supportive environment to children who are being abused, have been abused and may be abused in the future.

The school through classwork, assemblies, visits from outside agencies etc. has put in place a “child protection ethos” which provides a safe and secure environment for our pupils. We aim to involve the whole school in creating a “listening school”.

The school offers protection on two levels:

1. Immediate protection – creating a listening environment that makes it easier for children to share their concerns.
2. Long-term protection, enhancing self-esteem and encouraging social skills which will help children to break the cycle of abusive behaviour.

The Board of Governors ensure that:

- a) The school curriculum includes a programme for pupils on personal protection.
- b) The school has and follows the Code of Practice for the conduct of all members of staff both teaching and non-teaching. This code covers all activities organised by the school whether on school premises or elsewhere.
- c) Persons beyond the school staff who are invited as helpers/leaders on trips, residential visits or other out of school activities are subject to vetting procedures in keeping with current arrangements for the care and protection of young people.

✓ **Recognition:**

We use the following definitions for Child Abuse:

- a) **Neglect:** The persistent failure of a parent, guardian or carer to meet a child’s physical, emotional and psychological needs which is likely to lead to significant harm. It may involve the parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing; failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger: failure to provide access to medical care or treatment; lack of supervision or lack of stimulation.

Physical signs of neglect

- Constant hunger
- Exposed to danger through lack of supervision
- Inadequate / Inappropriate clothing
- Poor personal hygiene
- Untreated medical problems
- Emaciation

Behavioural signs of neglect

- Tiredness
- Lack of peer relationships
- Low self-esteem
- Destructive tendencies
- Compulsive stealing / begging

- Frequent lateness / non-attendance at school
- Chronic running away
- Scavenging for food and clothes

b) **Physical Abuse:** The failure to prevent physical injury or causing actual physical injury to a child. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, scalding, confinement to a room or the inappropriate giving of drugs to control behaviour.

Physical signs of physical abuse

- Scratches
- Bite marks or welts
- Bruises
- Burns, especially cigarette burns
- Untreated injuries

Behavioural signs of physical abuse

- Self mutilation tendencies
- Running away
- Bullying
- Aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of returning home / parents being contacted
- Undue fear of adults
- Flinching at sudden movements / withdrawn from physical contact
- Fearful watchfulness
- Improbable excuses to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries

c) **Sexual Abuse:** The actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child for an adult's or another young person's own gratification. The activity may involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. Sexual abuse may include non contact activities such as involving children looking at or in the production of pornographic material. Watching sexual activities or encouraging children to act in a sexually inappropriate manner.

Physical signs of sexual abuse

- Soreness, bleeding in genital area
- Itching in genital area
- Stomach pains or headaches
- Pain on urination
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Bruises on inner thigh or buttocks
- Anorexia / bulimia

Behavioural signs of sexual abuse

- Chronic depression
- Self mutilation
- Inappropriate language and sexual knowledge for age group
- Sexualised play with explicit acts

- Making sexual advances to adults or other children
- Obsessive washing
- Low self-esteem
- Afraid of the dark
- Wariness of being approached by anyone
- Substance / drug abuse
- In possession of unexplained large sums of money or gifts
- Truancy / running away

d) **Emotional Abuse:** Emotional rejection or ill treatment of a child resulting in adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of the child.

- It may involve conveying to the child that he/she is worthless and unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as he/she meets the needs of another person.
- It may involve the child feeling frightened or in danger
- It may involve the exploitation or corruption of a child
- Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional harm.

Physical signs of emotional abuse

- Short stature
- Poor hair
- Alopecia
- Poor skin
- Swollen extremities
- Recurrent diarrhoea
- Non-accidental injuries
- Sudden speech disorders
- Drug / solvent abuse
- Self mutilation
- Eating disorders

Behavioural signs of emotional abuse

- Rocking, thumb sucking and hair twisting
- Chronic running away
- Poor peer relationships
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Inappropriate emotional responses to stressful situations
- Self mutilation
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Substance / drug abuse

(e) **Bullying:** This is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and will not be tolerated in our school. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring and will take immediate steps to stop

it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Any incident of bullying will be reported to the Principal.

Any complaint made by a parent that their child is being bullied will be investigated and action will be taken to protect the victim. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a response from the Principal indicating the investigation which has been carried out and what action has been taken.

The sanctions taken against a bully will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of privileges or position of responsibility within the class or school. His/her behaviour will be closely monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped.

Response

✓ Referral:

Procedures for reporting suspected or disclosed child abuse:

The Principal Mr J Priestley

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection is the Vice-Principal Mrs E Belch.

The Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection is our Primary 3 Teacher Mrs P Best.

If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse then that member of staff must act promptly.

It is not our role to investigate. That is a matter for Social Services. The member of staff should immediately report their concerns to the designated teacher, discuss the matter and keep a written record.

A decision will then be made whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. **If there are concerns that the child may be at risk then we are obliged to make a referral.** Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the abuser, the parents will be informed immediately. The Principal may seek clarification or advice through consultation with the Designated Officer from the SELB before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be kept fully up to date on all of these issues. **The safety of the child is our first priority.**

Allegation against a member of staff

If an allegation about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal must be informed immediately. The above procedure will apply unless the complaint is about the Principal. In such circumstances the Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

Allegation against the Principal

If an allegation is made against the Principal the Vice-Principal should be informed immediately. They in turn will notify the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

Suspension from duty

Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services.

Referral may occur if:

- A child makes a disclosure to a teacher
- The class teacher has concerns about a pupil either as the result of one observation or many observations over a period of time
- A supervisor, classroom assistant, ancillary staff member or another pupil informs the teacher of signs observed in the child.

The teacher must then:

- Try to clarify the situation by listening to the child's story to confirm or allay fears.
- Take proper notes recording time, date, place, behaviour and words of the child
- Draw diagrams (if appropriate) of bruising
- Discuss the case with the designated teacher and pass on all notes. If the allegation is against the designated teacher information should be shared with the deputy designated teacher and the Chairman of the Governors.

During this procedure the teacher must not:

- Interrogate the child
- Use leading questions
- Impose assumptions
- Criticise the perpetrator
- Undress the child to find evidence
- Take photographs of any injuries
- Video tape the interview
- Make the child sign any written notes
- Make promises of confidentiality
- Make the child repeat his/her disclosure to another member of staff
- Undertake investigations beyond the initial enquiry or extensive enquiries of other family members or carers.

The designated teacher will then:

- Plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is maintained
- Seek advice about whether to take further action. Advice taken from – deputy designated teacher, SELB Officers, Social Services, School Nurse, EWO etc. **Names do not have to be given when seeking advice.** Any advice should be recorded.

- Decide if a referral is required. If necessary a confidential referral is made to Social Services.
- Continue to monitor and review the situation

Confidentiality:

For reasons of confidentiality the only people who need to know details of suspected cases are:

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| a) Mr. J. Priestley | Principal |
| b) Mrs. E. Belch | Designated Teacher |
| c) Mrs. P. Best | Deputy Designated Teacher |
| d) Mr. G. Mullan | Chairman of the Board of Governors |

Other members of staff need to know only enough to prepare them to act with sensitivity to a distressed pupil. They do not need to know detail

Record Keeping:

All records, information and confidential notes will be kept in separate files in a locked drawer. These will only identify the child by their initials and date of birth. These records are kept separate from the child’s individual report.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the school’s disciplinary procedures, a summary is entered on a Record of Abuse Complaints. This entry, which will contain details of the complaint, will be made available to the Board of Governors at least annually.

A Code of Conduct for Employees of Moyallon Primary School

The fundamental principle in child care law and practice is that the welfare of the child must always be the paramount consideration in decisions taken about him or her.

This Code of Conduct is designed to help staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering advice on prudent conduct.

Relationships and Attitudes:

All staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils. Care should be taken that their conduct does not give rise to any form of speculation. This applies to physical contact with pupils but also extends to how pupils are treated verbally and emotionally.

1. One to one meetings with pupils

It is recognised that there will be occasions when a member of staff will have occasion to speak to a pupil on a one to one basis. Staff should be aware of the potential dangers which may arise from such meetings.

- As far as possible use a room with visual access or leave the door open
- Where such conditions cannot be applied always ensure that another adult knows the meeting is taking place
- Where possible another pupil, or preferably another adult should be present or nearby

What does a member of staff do if a child shares sensitive information?

- stay calm, listen, accept the information provided, take notes informing the child why you are doing this
- reassure the child that it is not their fault
- do not promise confidentiality as you may have to share the information in line with the Child Protection Policy
- say things like: "I'm glad you told me", "Now we can do something about this situation", "I sorry this has happened to you"
- record brief notes to write up in more detail later. Include date, time, location, words/phrases used by the child, others present
- follow the guidance set down in our Child Protection Policy
- inform the designated teacher for Child Protection
- **do not** interrogate the child or ask leading questions nor should a child be asked to repeat the disclosure to another member of staff.

2. Physical Contact

- Staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils. However, they should not feel inhibited from providing physical comfort and reassurance for a distressed child as a caring parent would do.
- Staff should never touch a child who has indicated that he/her would be uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm or damage.
- Physical contact should be governed by the age and developmental stage of the child.
- Physical punishment is illegal as is any form of physical response to behaviour unless it is by way of necessary restraint
- Staff who administer First Aid to pupils should ensure wherever possible this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. However, in an emergency staff should not hesitate to administer First Aid even though someone else is not present.
- Any physical contact which is likely to be misrepresented by the pupil, parent or other casual observers should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a staff member feels their actions could be misconstrued they should immediately inform another member of staff, preferably the Principal or Vice-Principal.
- Particular care should be taken when supervising pupils in a residential setting or out of school activity where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment.

Restraint

- Staff can use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- injury to himself/herself, other children or a member of staff
- damaging property
- committing an offence
- Staff have the right to use reasonable force when a pupil is on school premises or elsewhere when he/she has lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned.
- Staff members should inform the Principal after any incident where reasonable force is used.
- A written account should be made of each incident recording names of those involved, where and when the incident took place, names of witnesses, why it was deemed necessary to use reasonable force, a brief account of the steps taken to defuse the situation and the outcome of the incident.
- Reasonable force should only be used as a last resort after other behavioural management strategies have been exhausted. Staff should communicate to the pupil throughout the incident what the ramifications of their actions may be. Staff should stay calm and measured throughout the incident.
- Parents should be informed at the earliest possible opportunity of an incident involving their child.

3. Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- Teachers should avoid using materials which might be misinterpreted.
- Parental permission should be sought when using teaching materials of a sensitive nature.
- If in doubt about the appropriateness of any material the teacher should consult the Principal before using it.

04. Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances employees' professional judgement will be exercised. If employees have any doubts about the points in these guidelines or how they should act in a particular circumstance they should consult the Principal or a representative of their professional organisation.

From time to time it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles and relationships with pupils to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions.

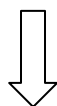
Moyallon Primary School Policy for Reporting a Complaint about Possible Child Abuse

How a parent can make a complaint:

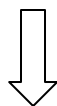
I have a concern about my or another child's safety



I can talk to the class teacher



If I am still concerned I can talk to the Principal Mr Priestley, the Designated Teacher for Child Protection Mrs Belch or the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection Mrs Best



If I am still concerned I can talk/write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors Mr. G. Mullan

Complaints against school staff

If a complaint or allegation is made against a member of staff in the context of a child protection issue the matter should immediately be referred to the Principal.

The Principal may then need to make clarification of the complaint if it was not made directly to him. If satisfied that a complaint has been made the Principal should inform the Designated Officer in the SELB and the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

When a member of staff receives a complaint concerning possible child abuse by the Principal he/she should inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors who then takes on the Principal's role in following the above procedures

Complaint against a member of the Board of Governors

When a member of staff receives a complaint concerning possible child abuse by a member of the Board of Governors they should follow the procedures set out in the Child Protection Policy.

The Principal should immediately inform the Chairman, unless he is the subject of the complaint, in which case the Principal should inform the Vice-Chairman.

The Designated Officer in the SELB should be informed immediately.

Anonymous Information

In the case of an anonymous complaint the Principal should consider whether the allegation may have substance and consult with the SELB for advice if necessary.

Record of Child Abuse Complaints

Written records should be kept at every stage.

If a complaint is made against a member of the school staff or Governors then the Principal should keep a written account in a file named Record of Child Abuse – Complaints. This document should be kept in a secure place and made available to the Board of Governors on request or at least on an annual basis.

Staff In-Service Training:

The school is committed to on-going in-service training for all staff. All staff will receive general training on Policy and Procedures with the Principal and Vice Principal receiving Level II and Level III training.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The school will update this Policy and Procedure in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary. On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the policy.

This Policy updated September 2010.