



Our Lady's School

Founded 1953
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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Our Lady's School Mission Statement

Our Lady's School is a community that embraces Christian values. The education it provides is rooted in a deep sense of faith.

We aim to create a positive inclusive environment which enables everyone to reach their full potential. We promote mutual respect within the school community and strive to provide a happy and secure atmosphere which fosters a love of learning.

We encourage the development of the whole person, by fostering the personal, spiritual and moral development of every student. The realisation of individual talents and academic excellence is paramount.

We aim to create a friendly, healthy, safe and caring environment which affirms our pride in the school.

We promote the development of the necessary skills so that students may become responsible members of society. It is our wish to see every student leave Our Lady's School with moral integrity and a heightened sense of social conscience.

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 **Children First : National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)** and **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2011)**, the Board of Management of Our Lady's School has agreed the following child protection policy:

AIM OF POLICY

It is the policy of Our Lady's School to safeguard the welfare of all students by protecting them from neglect, physical, sexual and emotional harm.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Give direction and guidance to staff in dealing with allegations/suspicions of child abuse.
- Provide information to staff to enable them to be alert and to be aware of what to do in situations where there are concerns for a student's welfare.

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.

In its policies, practices and activities, Our Lady's 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
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The Child Protection Policy is supported by other school policies:

- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- School Trips Policy
- Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy
- PE Policy
- Transition Year Work Experience Procedures
- Critical Incident Management Policy

PROCEDURES

Students – If students are concerned about the welfare of another student they are encouraged to speak to any member of the teaching staff regarding their concerns.

All School Staff – School personnel are well placed to observe changes in behaviour, failure to develop or outward signs of abuse in children. Staff should be familiar with signs and behaviour that may be indicative of child abuse. See appendix 1 – Categories, Signs and symptoms of Child Abuse.

In situations where a member of staff suspects that a student may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, they should ensure that concerns are reported to the Designated Liaison Person, in accordance with the procedures as outlined in this policy document. See appendix 2 – Dealing with disclosures from students.

Designated Liaison Persons – The designated person acts as a liaison person with outside agencies and as a resource person for any member of staff who has child protection concerns. The designated person liaises with health boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties, in connection with allegations of and/or concerns about child abuse. It is the responsibility of the designated Liaison Person to inform the Board of Management as soon as possible of any reports relating to student in the school has been submitted to the health board. The Designated Liaison Person ensures that the confidentiality of the student is not compromised.

The Designated Liaison Person is Ms. Pauline Meany, Principal.

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Ms Marguerite Gorby, Deputy Principal.

The full text of the Guidelines (Child Protection Procedures for Primary & Post-Primary Schools) is attached or can be seen at the following link:

http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/cp_procedures_primary_post_primary_2011.pdf?language=EN

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children & Youth Affairs) is attached or can be seen at the following link : www.cnci.ie/ChildrenFirst.pdf

This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents/guardians on request. A copy of this policy will be available on the school website.

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 _____

Appendix 1 – Categories, Signs and symptoms of Child Abuse.

Categories of Child Abuse

Child abuse can take different forms, but usually consists of one or more of the following:

- **Neglect** - Where a child's needs for food, warmth, shelter, nurturance and safety are not provided to the extent that the child suffers significant harm
- **Emotional Abuse** - Where a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security is not being met. For children with disabilities it may include over-protection or conversely failure to acknowledge or understand a child's disability.
- **Physical Abuse** - Where a child is assaulted or injured in some way that is deliberate.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Where a child is used for the sexual gratification of another.

Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. A cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. The indicators highlighted in this document should be noted. It is important however for staff to realise that all these indicators can occur in other situations where abuse has not been a factor and that the list is not exhaustive.

Physical Indicators

Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas

Repeated injury

Black eye

Injury to mouth

Torn or bloodstained clothes

Burns or scalds

Fractures

Marks from implements

Inconsistent stories, excuses relating to injury

Behavioural / Developmental Indicators

Unexplained changes in behaviour – becoming withdrawn or aggressive

Regressive behaviour

Difficulty in making friends

Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults

Sudden drop in performance

Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language

Unusual reluctance to remove clothing

Reluctance to go home

Change in attendance pattern

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in older children may include mood change, running away, substance abuse, self harm, suicide attempts, delinquency, truancy, eating disorders and isolation.

Taken from 'Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools' Department of Education and Science – Sept 2004

Appendix 2 - Dealing with disclosures from students

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and a member of staff may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. Great care should be taken not to damage that trust.

It is important to tell the student that everything possible will be done to protect and support him/her, but not to make promises that cannot be kept e.g. promising not to tell anyone else.

If you suspect child abuse or if a student makes a disclosure to you:

- Do realise that your concerns could be significant and should be passed on. Tell the Designated Liaison Person of your concerns.
- Don't examine the student
- Don't ask leading questions
- Do allow the student to do the talking
- Do listen – take the student seriously

- Do remain calm and caring
- Do allow the student to finish
- Do record the conversation as soon as possible afterwards (it is important to use the student's own words)
- Do tell the student what is going to happen next, such as informing the designated liaison person
- Don't postpone or delay the opportunity to listen
- Don't allow your own feelings (such as anger, pity or shock) to surface
- Don't make false promises (that you will keep 'the secret' for example)
- Don't interpret what you have been told, just record it.

If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a student may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person.

Record Keeping

When child abuse is suspected, it is essential to have a written record of all the information available. Staff should note carefully what they have observed and when they observed it. Signs of physical injury should be described in detail and, if appropriate sketched. Any comment by the student concerned, or by any other person, about how the injury occurred should be recorded, preferably quoting words actually used, as soon as possible after the comment has been made.

The record of discussion should be signed and dated by the member of staff and given to the Designated Liaison Person. **The need for confidentiality at all times should be borne in mind.**

The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the student.