



ST PAUL'S SCHOOL'S CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Updated procedures on Child Protection 2023

St Paul's is a special school. In accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Addendum to Children First (2019), the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023) and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements, the Board of Management of St Paul's YEP has agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document.

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 (revised 2023)* as part of this overall Child Safeguarding Statement

2 The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is

David Carter

3 The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is

Peter Caffrey

4 The Relevant Person is David Carter

(The relevant person is one who can provide information in respect of how the child safeguarding statement was developed and will be able to provide the statement on request. This person can also be the DLP)

5 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, procedures, practices and activities. In its policies, procedures, practices and activities, the 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 comply with its statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;
- 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.



6 The following procedures/measures are in place:

- In relation to any member of staff who is the subject of any investigation (howsoever described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child attending the school, the school adheres to the relevant procedures set out in Chapter 7 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023)* and to the relevant agreed disciplinary procedures for school staff which are published on the gov.ie website.
- In relation to the selection or recruitment of staff and their suitability to work with children, the school adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relevant Garda vetting and recruitment circulars published by the Department of Education and available on the gov.ie website.
- In relation to the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to staff in respect of the identification of the occurrence of harm (as defined in the 2015 Act) the school-
 - Has provided each member of staff with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
 - Ensures all new staff are provided with a copy of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
 - Encourages staff to avail of relevant training
 - Encourages Board of Management members to avail of relevant training
 - The Board of Management maintains records of all staff and Board member training
- In relation to reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all school personnel are required to adhere to the procedures set out in the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023)*, including in the case of registered teachers, those in relation to mandated reporting under the Children First Act 2015.
- All registered teachers employed by the school are mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.
- In accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and the Addendum to Children First (2019), the Board has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while attending the school or participating in school activities. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and the school's procedures for managing those risks is included with the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- The various procedures referred to in this Statement can be accessed via the school's website, the gov.ie website or will be made available on request by the school.

Note: The above is not intended as an exhaustive list. Individual Boards of Management shall also include in this section such other procedures/measures that are of relevance to the school in question.



- 7 This statement has been published on the school's website and has been provided to all members of school personnel, the Parents' Association (if any) and the patron. It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Statement will be made available to Tusla and the Department if requested.
- 8 This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

This Child Safeguarding Statement was reviewed by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: _____

Date: _____

The updated Child Protection Procedures require that all Boards of Management use the templates published by the Department of Education and Skills when preparing, publishing and reviewing their Child Safeguarding Statement. The following are the templates that are required to be used by Boards of Management;

- **Template 1: Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Template**
- **Template 2: Child Safeguarding Statement Template**
- **Template 3: Checklist for Review of the Child Safeguarding Statement**
- **Template 4: Notification regarding the Board of Management's review of the Child Safeguarding Statement**



St Paul's policy gives additional focus on the following issues:

1. **Definition of Child Abuse.**
2. **Guidelines for the recognition of Child Abuse.**
3. **The role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).**
4. **Duty of School Staff regarding concerns for the welfare of a child.**
5. **Procedure to be followed when abuse is suspected.**
6. **Protection of Staff who make allegations of abuse.**
7. **When an allegation is made against a staff member.**
8. **Sexual abuse by children and young people.**

1. Definition of Child Abuse.

The national guidelines for the protection and welfare of children break child abuse into four areas:

- Neglect.
- Emotional Abuse.
- Physical Abuse.
- Sexual Abuse.

Child Neglect.

'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. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Emotional Abuse.

This is identified in the Guidelines as being more concerned with aspects of the Adult/child relationship rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It includes such issues as sarcasm, hostility blaming, emotional withdrawal from the child, inappropriate expectations or responsibility being placed on the child, exposure to over-harsh disciplinary methods or 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.

Any form of non-accidental injury, or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. This might include shaking, use of excessive force in handling, or allowing or creating a risk of significant harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse.



This occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her sexual gratification or sexual arousal. Examples of this might be, exposure of the sexual organs to the child, intentional touching for the purpose of sexual gratification, to perform a sex act in the presence of the child or to involve the child in the performance of a sex act, exposing a child to material of a sexual nature, 'grooming,' oral anal or vaginal sexual intercourse with a child.

2. Guidelines for the recognition of Child Abuse.

A useful model endorsed by Children First to aid in the identification of child abuse involves three stages:

- Considering the possibility.
- Looking out for signs of abuse.
- Recording of information.

“A suspicion which is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.”

(Children First, 4.3.3.)

The presence of some of the following signs should give grounds for concern for staff, although it cannot be stressed enough that this is not an exhaustive list.

Child neglect should be suspected in cases of:

Abandonment or desertion.

Children persistently being left alone without adequate care and supervision.

Malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding.

Lack of warmth.

Lack of adequate clothing.

Lack of protection and exposure to danger including moral danger or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age.

Persistent failure to attend school.

Non-organic failure to thrive.

Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical problems.

Exploited, overworked.

Emotional abuse should be considered if the following indices are present:

Rejection.

Lack of praise and encouragement.

Lack of comfort and love.

Lack of attachment.

Lack of proper stimulation.

Lack of continuity of care.

Serious over-protectiveness.

Inappropriate non-physical punishment.



Family conflicts and/or violence.

Every child who is abused sexually, physically or neglected is also emotionally abused.

Inappropriate expectations of a child's behaviour.

Signs and symptoms of physical abuse:

Bruises.

Fractures.

Swollen joints.

Burns/scalds.

Abrasions/lacerations.

Haemorrhages.

Damage to body organs.

Poisonings.

Failure to thrive.

Signs and symptoms of sexual abuse:

Bleeding from vagina/anus.

Difficulty in passing urine/faeces.

Genital infection.

Uncharacteristic change of behaviour.

Hints about sexual activity.

Age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour.

Inappropriate seductive behaviour.

Sexually aggressive behaviour with others.

Uncharacteristic sexual play with peers.

Unusual reluctance to take part in normal activities which involve undressing (e.g. swimming).

Mood change.

Bedwetting.

Lack of concentration.

Psychosomatic complaints.

Skin disorders.

Nightmares.

School refusal.

Separation anxiety.

Loss of appetite.

Isolation.

Running away.

Drug, alcohol, solvent abuse.

Self-mutilation.

Suicide attempts.

Delinquency.

Eating disorders.

If abuse is suggested, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much information as possible. Observations by staff should be accurately recorded and dated.

3. The role of the designated liaison person.

The Board in line with its responsibilities under the act will appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who will undertake all dealings with the Health Authority, an Garda Siochana, and other



authorities in relation to allegations of abuse. This position may be undertaken by the Principal, but if this is not the case, the DLP will be expected to liaise at all stages of the process with the Principal. All enquiries/dealings with such agencies should be processed through the DLP. She/he should immediately inform the Chairperson (and the principal if the DLP is not the principal) of any allegations made.

4. Duty of School Staff regarding concerns for the welfare of a child.

The Board recommends that if a Staff Member have concerns that they review these guidelines in conjunction with Children First and discuss these concerns with the DLP or with the Principal.

If a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff you should do the following:

Listen to the child.

Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child.

Offer reassurances but do not make promises.

Do not stop a child recalling significant events.

Do not over react.

Explain that further help may have to be sought.

Record the discussion accurately and retain the record.

Report the information to the DLP.

Give the record of the discussion to the DLP who should inform the Principal, retain the record and take appropriate action.

Confidentiality.

The guiding principle to be borne in mind is that the child's welfare comes first. Everything is subordinate to this including the question of confidentiality. If maintaining a confidentiality leaves a child/children at risk, the interests of the child are not protected. To maintain a confidentiality under these circumstances breaches these guidelines and the Children First guidelines.

“Giving information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.”
(Children First, 5.2.3.).

A staff member should therefore not give a blanket assurance of confidentiality to a child, as this may be impossible to maintain and then may be viewed by the child as a further betrayal and leave the child feeling vulnerable.

Legal protection for staff who make such a report is provided by the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998. This provides for immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith.”

5. Procedure to be followed when abuse is suspected.

If a staff member suspects abuse or if allegations are disclosed to a staff member they should bring these concerns at an early stage to the DLP.



If the staff member and the DLP are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the DLP should inform the Principal and report the matter to the relevant health authority immediately.

If there are concerns but a lack of certainty as to whether the matter should be reported, the DLP should seek appropriate advice from the relevant authority. If it is subsequently advised then a referral should be made, the DLP should act on that advice.

If the DLP decides not to refer the concerns to the health authority, the staff member should be given a clear statement in writing as to the reasons why action is not being taken. If the staff member remains concerned, she/he is free to consult with or report to the relevant health authority and furnish the DLP with a copy of the TUSLA report form.

Information on the above should be shared on a need to know basis, in accordance with the guidelines.

6. Protection of Staff who make allegations of 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.” The Board of Management endorses the responsibility of all to report suspected child abuse in accordance with the provisions of Children First and will support any staff member who does so.

7. When an allegation is made against a staff member.

The most important consideration to be taken into account by the Board of Management is the protection of children and their safety and well-being must be a priority. However, the BOM also has duties in respect of employees. Any allegation made against a staff member will be dealt with sensitively and the employee will be fairly treated. This includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry.

In the event of an allegation being made against a staff member, the Board has two procedures to follow:

The reporting procedure in respect of the allegation.

The DLP, in liaison with the Principal, will be responsible for reporting the matter to the relevant health authority. Other staff members who become aware of allegations should report them to the DLP, who will act in accordance with the reporting principles outlined. In the event of an allegation being made against the DLP or Principal, the Chairperson will assume this responsibility. Any allegations being made against the DLP or Principal should be reported to the Chairperson.

When an allegation is made, the DLP should act in accordance with procedures outlined in Children First. A written statement of the allegations should be sought.

In the event of a staff member having suspicions regarding the conduct of another staff member, she/he should consult with the DLP. The DLP may consult with the health authority as outlined above. In the event that the DLP and staff member are satisfied there are reasonable grounds for suspicion, the DLP should report the matter to the relevant health authority immediately. If the DLP is not the Principal, the Principal should be informed at all stages of the process. The DLP should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.



The procedure for dealing with the employee.

When the Chairperson receives an allegation against an employee, he/she should privately inform the employee of the following:

- 1) The fact that an allegation has been made.
- 2) The nature of the allegation.
- 3) Whether or not the DLP has reported the matter to the relevant health authority.

The employee should be given a copy of any written allegation, and any other relevant documentation. She/he should be requested to respond to the Board in writing within a specified time regarding the allegation, and made aware that this response will be passed on to the relevant health authority.

The Board should take whatever action is necessary to protect the child, while being mindful of not unreasonably penalising the employee. If the Chairperson is of the opinion that the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action, the Chairperson on behalf of the Board will direct the employee to absent him/herself from the school with immediate effect. If in doubt, the Chairperson may consult with the Gardai and the relevant health authority before making a decision.

The absence involved will be administrative leave of absence with pay and not a suspension.

The Chairperson will convene a meeting of the Board of Management to inform them of the allegations and advice received.

At a subsequent meeting, the Board will consider in detail the allegations, their source, the relevant advice and the employee's written response. The person/agency making these allegations will be given an opportunity to present their case to the Board and may be accompanied by another person in doing so. Parents/guardians may act on behalf of a child. The staff member will be afforded a similar opportunity to present his/her case.

Having followed all procedures outlined in Children First and in relevant other documentation, and having satisfied itself that it has sufficient information to make a determination, the Board should make a decision on what action, if any, it considers necessary to take in respect of the staff member. The Department of Education and Science should be informed as is relevant.

8. Sexual abuse by children and young people.

As in other situations cited above, where there are concerns but not sufficient certainty to know how to act, the DLP should be approached to seek advice from the relevant health authority. The procedures to be followed as are listed above.

The Board will support the staff in making arrangements to minimise the possibility of any abusive behaviour re-occurring within the school, and to provide whatever reassurance it can to parents/guardians and children.

Signed _____ Date: *10th November 2021*
Conor Mc Carthy
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date: *10th November 2021*
David Carter
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management