

**St Stephen's De La Salle**  
**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

The ethos of St. Stephen's is to give a Christian and Human education to our pupils to prepare them for life, and that they will have respect for themselves and all people they come in contact with.

We recognise that the children in our care have a fundamental right to be protected from harm and we will do all in our power to safeguard and promote their welfare and safety. Mindful of this primary duty of care the Board of Management of St. Stephen's fully endorses "Children First" the guidelines for the protection and welfare of children as issued by the Department of Health and Children September 1999 and "Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures" from the Department of Education and Science April 2001.

**Aims**

1. To promote the safety, protection and welfare of all the pupils in the care of the school.
2. To inform all members of the school community of the procedures in place in this school for dealing with all aspects of child protection.

This policy is designed to set out the procedures to be followed by all employees where abuse or neglect or a child is evident or suspected.

**Definition of Child Abuse**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types  
Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse

**Neglect:** Where a child's need for food, warmth, shelter, nurturance and safety are not provided, to the extent that the child suffers significant harm.

**Physical Abuse:** Where a child is assaulted or injured in some way that is deliberate.

**Sexual Abuse:** Where a child is used for sexual gratification of another.

**Emotional Abuse:** Where a child's needs for affection, approval and security are not being met and have not been met for some time by their parent or carer.

**Identifying Abuse**

Because of their day to day contact with individual children, school staff – especially teachers, but also non-teaching staff – are particularly well placed to observe outward symptoms of abnormality or change in appearance, behaviour,

learning pattern or development. Such symptoms may be due to a variety of other causes, including bereavement or other disruption in family circumstances, or drug, alcohol or solvent misuse. Sometimes however they may be due to child abuse.

Staff should be aware of bruises, particularly those which may indicate the use of a strap or a stick, bites, burns and other odd marks. These may be evident when children change clothes for PE, Games or Swimming etc. Poor clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparent deficient nutrition may indicate physical neglect.

Excessive attention seeking or dependence may indicate emotional abuse. Sexual abuse may exhibit physical signs or lead to a substantial behavioural change including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate behaviour.

Ultimate responsibility for Child Protection within St. Stephen`s lies with the Board of Management.

The Board nominated the Principal as the designated liaison person (DLP) to act as a liaison with outside agencies such as the HSE and as a resource person to any staff having child protection concerns.

In the absence of the Principal Ms Lowe, the Deputy Principal Ms Widger will act as Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

- The Board fully endorses arrangements for vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in circular 0094/2006. June 2006, for the Department of Education and science.
- The Board will ensure that all school staff teaching and non-teaching are aware of their obligations under the guidelines detailed in Children First and the procedures to be followed in the event of concern and will attend any further training that is necessary.
- The Board recognises that it has two duties of care, the Primary duty is the protection, safety and welfare of the children attending St. Stephen's School. The Board as an employer also has duties and responsibilities towards its employees.
- As an employer the Board will seek legal advice if an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee if necessary.
- The Board will adhere to the protocol outlined in Chapter 4, Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse of School Employee from the "Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures" from the Department of Education and Science 2001, to authorise any actions required to protect the children in its care.

- The Board notes that school employee's may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Any allegations of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and in confidence. The employee should be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. The Board accepts that the principles of natural justice and fair procedures must be adhered to.
- The Board is committed to the maintenance of an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. All children in the school will be made aware that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.
- To develop the skills they need to keep them safe the children will be taught The Stay Safe Programme.
- Each staff member in a manner consistent with their duty of care will monitor the progress of pupils about whom there may be concerns and at risk. These concerns will be documented in a file and kept in a secure location in the office.

### **Role of Designated Liaison Person**

#### **The Designated Liaison Person will have responsibility for**

- Ensuring that all staff whether full time, part-time or temporary are aware of the school procedures.
- Co-ordinating action in cases of suspected child abuse and reporting to Tusla , parents and the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- The standard report form may be used.
- In the event of an emergency the Gardai may be informed.

### **Informal Consultation**

The designated person may seek clarification or advice and consult with Tusla before a formal referral is made. Provided that no child is identified by name, the case and its circumstances may be discussed with complete confidentiality and with the full understanding that the Health Board cannot be further involved until a formal referral is made.

### **Record Keeping**

All concerns about possible child abuse and other protection issues in St. Stephen's Primary school will be recorded. This will include dates, events and action taken. It is possible to record the information on a computer or manually and it is understood that, in the cases of alleged child abuse which come to court, the court may require the school to provide its full records on the child.

The designated person shall attend case conferences or submit a written report to

such a conference on request from the Tusla and shall comply with all instructions and recommendations made by such conferences and other recognised bodies.

The social worker will be informed if the child changes school.

When a member of staff is concerned that abuse has occurred, he or she must document concerns and report it then immediately to the designated person.

### **Liability of Staff**

Any teacher or member of staff who complies with school procedure in making a report of suspected child abuse is acting within the course of his / her employment and in such circumstances, where he / she acted in good faith, will receive the full support of the Board of Management and will not be legally or financially liable.

- The policy statement regard Child Protection at St. Stephen`s applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers and contractors working in the school.
- At the first staff meeting every year the D.L.P will reinforce the importance and need to follow and adhere to our schools Child Protection Policy and procedures. A copy will be given to all new members of staff.
- This policy statement and “Children First” is available for viewing in the office.
- This policy statement will be subject to review in January 2024.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson.

\_\_\_\_\_ D.L.P.

\_\_\_\_\_ Deputy D.L.P.

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