

Monkstown Nursery School Child Protection/ Safeguarding Policy

INTRODUCTION

The governors and staff of Monkstown Nursery School fully recognise the contribution they make to safeguarding children. We recognise that all staff, including volunteers, have a full and active part in protecting our pupils from harm.

All staff and Governors believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical and emotional development of the individual child.

This policy is informed by the guidance and procedures set out by DE 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection 1999, the Area Child Protection Committees' (ACPC) Regional Policy and Procedures 2005, the amendments to the ACPC policy and Guidelines 2008 and DE 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools 2017'. We consult regularly with parents in the revision of this policy.

The central thrust of The Children (Northern Ireland) Order is that *'the welfare of the child must be of paramount consideration'* in all decisions concerning the child. This is also reflected in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – *the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration*. The 'paramount' of the child principle underpins our Child Protection policy and procedures.

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school. The purpose of the procedures set out in this policy is to safeguard and protect our pupils by ensuring that every adult who works in our school – teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers – has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The issue of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school and we know some forms of abuse are also a criminal offence. We also recognise the impact on children of an abusive family setting.

The Safeguarding Team at Monkstown Nursery School

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| Chairperson of Board of Governors: | Mr D Thompson |
| Designated Governor for Child Protection: | Mrs E Craig |
| Principal: | Ms S Wilson |
| Designated Teacher for Child Protection: | Ms S Wilson |
| Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection: | Ms L Acheson |



Ms S Wilson



Ms L Acheson

What is child abuse?

Child abuse occurs when 'a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care.' (ACPC, 2005)

Child abuse occurs in families from all social classes and cultures and in communities, agencies and organisations. Abusers come from all walks of life and all occupations and professions. Child abuse can manifest in a number of ways and can involve a combination of the forms of abuse. (DE Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools 2017). A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

Types of Abuse

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Possible signs or symptoms of neglect include:

- Poor hygiene/poor state of clothes
- Constant hunger/cramming food
- Constant tiredness
- Exposed to danger/lack of adequate supervision
- Untreated illness
- Lack of peer relationships
- Compulsive stealing/begging

Physical Abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Possible signs or symptoms of physical abuse include:

- Unexplained bruises (in places difficult to mark)
- Human bite marks, welts or bald spots
- Unexplained lacerations, fractures or abrasions
- Untreated injuries
- Chronic runaway
- Fear of going home

Sexual abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse

is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can still commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Possible signs or symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- Bruised or sore genitals
- Genital infection
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Inappropriate sexualised language or behaviour
- Low self-esteem
- Chronic depression
- Unusual sexual themes in writings or drawings
- Personality changes
- Fear of going home

Emotional abuse - is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying - including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones - by a child's peers.

Possible signs or symptoms of emotional abuse include:

- Change in personality from outgoing to withdrawn
- Difficulty in forming/maintaining relationships with others
- Depression
- Self-harming
- Attention seeking
- Chronic runaway
- Wetting and soiling
- Sudden speech disorders
- Low self-esteem
- Bullying of others

Exploitation - is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, and engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purposes of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

*The above definitions are from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2016)

Domestic Violence

Children may also be harmed from the effects of witnessing domestic violence in the home.

Domestic Violence and Abuse is:

'Threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation) without their informed consent or understanding. (Department of Justice 2016)

Children who witness domestic abuse may:

- Become aggressive
- Display anti-social behaviour
- Suffer from depression or anxiety
- Poor school performance and attendance

Confidentiality

All staff and volunteers who receive sensitive information about children or parents in the course of their professional duties should be aware that such information is confidential, and is not to be made the subject of general conversation, or disclosed outside the school other than statutory officials, as required by this policy.

All records of a safeguarding/child protection nature are held securely within the school. Access to such records is restricted to the Principal and the Deputy Designated Teacher (DDT) for Child Protection.

Procedures for reporting disclosed or suspected child abuse

- Members of staff should exercise tact and sensitivity in responding to a disclosure of alleged abuse. They should act in the following way:
 - a) remain calm and reassuring – children who have suffered abuse may withdraw if they detect signs of doubt or revulsion;
 - b) listen carefully and quietly but **never** attempt to cross-examine the child, press for evidence or ask leading questions;
 - c) retain the child's trust, whilst explaining that his/her disclosure must be reported. Never promise confidentiality;
 - d) any disclosures of abuse reported by pupils and comments made subsequently by a parent, carer or other adult regarding the nature of the alleged abuse should be recorded on the appropriate form held in the office. Staff should be aware that these notes may need to be used in any subsequent court proceedings.

- e) whilst discreet preliminary clarification from parents or carers may help to confirm or allay concerns, it is not the responsibility of any member of staff to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse, or to make extensive enquiries of parents or carers.
- Any teacher or other member of staff who has knowledge or reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused should report his or her concerns to Ms Wilson or in her absence, Ms Acheson.
 - The Designated Teacher will decide 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, the school is obliged to make a referral.** Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.
 - The Designated Teacher may seek advice and consult with one of the Education Authority's Designated Officers 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 safety of the child is our first priority.**
 - Where there are concerns about possible abuse, the Designated Teacher will inform:
 - Social Services
 - The EA's Designated Officer for Child Protection
 - If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Designated Teacher and the Chairperson of the Board of Governors should be informed immediately. Where the matter is referred to Social Services and the EA's designated officer for child Protection, 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.
 - If a complaint is made against the Designated Teacher who is also the Principal, the Deputy Designated Teacher will be informed immediately. She will inform the chairperson of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

Supporting Vulnerable Children

The staff of Monkstown Nursery School recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging or they may be withdrawn.

Monkstown Nursery School will endeavour to support the pupils who are exposed to risk of harm through supporting such pupils in accordance with his/her agreed protection plan.

Staff are aware of domestic violence and its impact on children and cases will be reported to the appropriate statutory agency.

Preventative Curriculum

Support for all pupils in the school in developing skills in self protection and developing confidence will be afforded as follows:

Our school Code of Conduct and Intimate Care policies seek to protect both children and staff members by clearly outlining boundaries of appropriate physical contact when working with these groups of children.

Monkstown Nursery School is a fully inclusive environment with a range of visual supports/strategies to support communication at all levels and to ensure that the voice of the child is heard.

- Through the content of the curriculum, particularly through Personal Development.
- The school ethos which promotes a positive supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- By adhering to our other Safeguarding policies, namely Anti-Bullying, Intimate Care, Positive Behaviour, Safe Handling and Code of Conduct.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as Social Services, Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychology, PSNI and the school nurse.

Staff should be especially vigilant in their supervision of the children in their class who are on the child protection register. Any absences or general concerns should be reported immediately to the Designated Teacher.

Child Protection Case Conferences

The Designated Teachers will attend case conferences/LAC reviews as necessary. Case conference reports will be prepared by the child's class teacher. Reports should focus on the child's educational progress and achievements, attendance, behaviour, participation, relationships with other children and adults within the school and where appropriate the child's appearance.

- Reports should be objective and based on evidence.
 - They should contain only fact, observations and reasons for concern.
- Reports may be made available to parents at case conferences, and may be used in court.

Photographs/Videos of pupils

As part of our Child Protection Procedures, we ask parents to sign to give permission for their children's images (photographs/videos) to be used -

Observation purposes

The School Website

The seesaw App

Displays

Prospectus

Information booklet

Memory stick

How a parent can make a complaint about possible child abuse

If a parent has any concerns about possible child abuse he/she should, in the first instance discuss the matter with the child's class teacher. If the parent is still concerned, he/she should contact the designated teacher Ms Wilson who will report back to parents on the progress and outcome of their complaint within five working days (approximately). If the parent is still concerned or the complaint still has not been resolved, he/she should contact the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (see flow chart).

Parents will be informed of the means by which to pursue their complaint in the Parent's Handbook.

How a parent can make known a concern

I have a concern about my/a child's safety



I can talk to the class teacher



If I am still concerned, I can talk to Ms S Wilson, the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or Miss L Acheson, Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, Mr D Thompson



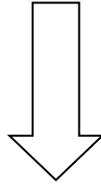
If I am still concerned I can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman
Tel: 0800 343 424



At any time, I can talk to the Social Worker on 03001 234333 or PSNI Central referral Unit on 02890259299

How a parent can make a complaint

Stage One
Write to the
Principal
Ms S Wilson



Stage Two
Write to the
Chairperson of
Board of
Governors
Mr D Thompson
C/o Monkstown
Nursery School

If unsatisfied, parents can also contact the
NI Public Services Ombudsman
Tel: 0800 343 424
Ombudsman Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Parents may have access to the school's complaints policy which is available from the office.

Vetting Procedures

The selection and appointment process is the starting point for ensuring that only those who are suitable are employed to work in close proximity with children, in either a paid or unpaid capacity in our school.

In order that all reasonable steps are taken to employ and engage suitable staff to work with the children in our care we follow the guidance on pre-employment checking and safe recruitment practices provided by the Department of Education and adhere to the arrangements for vetting and checking of staff prior to appointment or use as volunteers within the school.

All staff – whether paid or unpaid – are inducted in our Child Protection Policy prior to contact with the pupils in our school.

Students and Volunteers

All students and volunteers are made aware of child protection arrangements, intimate care and safe handling policies and the importance of confidentiality, through our 'Students' and Volunteers' Welcome booklet'.

Reviewed: April 2019