



Faugher
NATIONAL SCHOOL

Child Protection Policy

Faugher School aims to provide its pupils with the highest standards of care and protection, in order to promote each child's well-being and safeguard him/her from harm while in the school.

Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, the staff, parents and Board of Management of Faugher School have developed and agreed this policy.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:

- 1- Prevention- curriculum provision
- 2- Procedure – procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- 3- Practice – best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document will be made available to all staff. It is incumbent on all staff to familiarise themselves with 'Children First' and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment
- Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community.
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff
- Ensure that all staff members are aware of and familiar with the 'Children First' and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and / or disclosures of child abuse.

Definitions of Child Abuse

Child abuse may be suspected, witnessed or disclosed. It is complicated and can take different forms, but it usually consists of one or more of the following:

Neglect	Neglect is 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.
Emotional Abuse	Emotional Abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between an adult and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security is not met.
Physical Abuse	Physical Abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.
Sexual Abuse	Sexual Abuse is when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification of sexual arousal, or for that of others.

Prevention

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the school's SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

On enrolment of their child parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school and a copy of the 'Stay Safe: A Parent's Guide' provided. A copy of our school's Child Protection Policy will be readily accessible to parents on request.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

Programmes to Support Children's Awareness

The following programmes, support children's awareness of relevant Child Protection issues:

- The Stay Safe programme
- Anti-Bullying Lessons
- The RSE programme
- Circle Time

Procedures

The Board of Management of this school has appointed Dolores McDaid as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Pauline O'Connor as the deputy DLP. The DLP has specific responsibility for child protection and will represent the school in all dealings with Health Boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to the processing or investigation of child abuse should be processed through the DLP.

All staff (teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking, cleaning etc) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First' and the DES document 'Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures.'

When information is offered in confidence the member of staff will need to act with sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child, and retain his/her trust, while explaining the need for action and the possible consequences, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child 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. The welfare of the child is regarded as the first and paramount consideration. In so far as is practicable, due consideration will be given, having regard to age and understanding, the wishes of the child. The following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse.

- Remain calm
- Listen to the child with sensitivity and openness
- Take all disclosures seriously
- Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child
- Offer reassurance 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 of dates, times, names, locations, context and factual details of conversation.
- All concerns/disclosures involving child protection/ child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making the report. A record will be detained in the school to which the DLP, Secretary and Chairperson will have access. A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.

Practice

A) Physical Contact

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child. While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining its appropriateness:-

- It is acceptable to the child
- It is open and not secretive
- The age and developmental stage of the child

School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

B) Visitors / Guest Speakers

Visitors/ guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor / guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate.

C) Children with specific toileting/ intimate care needs

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/ intimate care a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, SNA, principal and if deemed necessary the class teacher and the pupil. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs. The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when the particular staff involved are absent. A written copy of what has been arranged will be made and kept in the child's file.

D) Toileting accidents

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has an 'accident' of this nature they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change. If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change him/herself and the parents / guardians cannot be contacted the child will be assisted by members of staff, familiar to the child. In all such situations two members of staff should be present.

E) One-to-one teaching

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment. Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought. Work being carried out by SNAs will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

F) Changing for games/ PE / swimming

Pupils may be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/ PE/ swimming. Where assistance is needed this will be done in the communal areas and with the consent of parents. In situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child.

Allegations Against School Employees

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management and the DLP is the safety and protection of the child. However, employees also have a right to protection against claims which are false or malicious.

As employers, the Board of management should always seek legal advice as the circumstances can vary from one case to another.

There are two procedures to be followed

- i The Reporting Procedure
- ii The Procedure for dealing with the Employee

The DLP has responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board. The Chairperson, Board of Management has responsibility, acting in consultation with his/her Board, for addressing the employment issues. If the allegation is against the DLP, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will assume the responsibility for reporting the matter to the Health Board.

Reporting

When an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee, the DLP should immediately act in accordance with the procedures outline in 'Child Protection'.

A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person/agency making the report. The DLP should always inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

School employees, other than the DLP who receive allegations against another school employee, should immediately report the matter to the DLP. School employees who form suspicions regarding conduct of another school employee should consult with the DLP. The procedures in accordance to the guidelines from the DES will then be followed.

The Chairperson of the Board and the DLP should make the employee aware privately

- a. That an allegation has been made against him/her
- b. The nature of the allegation
- c. Whether or not the Health Board of Gardaí has been/will be/must be/should be informed.

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation. The employee should be requested to respond to the allegation in writing to the Board of Management within a specified period and told that this may be passed to the Gardaí, Health Board and legal advisers.

The priority in all cases is that no child be exposed to unnecessary risk. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, the Chairperson should take any necessary protective measures. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee in any way unless to protect the child.

If the nature of the allegations warrant immediate action in the Chairperson's opinion, the Board of Management should be convened to consider the matter. The Board will consider feedback if any has been received from the Health Board, Gardaí or relevant source. This may result in the Board of Management directing that the employee absent him/herself from the school forthwith while the matter is being investigated (Administrative Leave). When the Board of Management is unsure as to whether this should occur, advice should be sought from the Gardaí and/or the Child Care Manager of the Health Board and the legal advisers to the Board of Management.

Administrative Leave

Should the Board of Management direct that the employee absent him/herself as above, such absence of the employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not suspension and would not imply any degree of guilt. The DES should be immediately informed.

Board of Management

The Chairperson should inform the Board of Management of all the details and remind the member of their serious responsibility to maintain strict confidentiality on all matters relating to the issue and the principles of due process and natural justice.

Ratified by the Board of Management of Faugher National School on _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management, Faugher National School