

BLESSINGTON EDUCATE  
TOGETHER NATIONAL  
SCHOOL

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Ratified by Board of Management on:	
Signed:	
Date:	
Chairperson, Board of Management	

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## **1.0 RATIONALE**

The Board of Management of Blessington Educate Together National School has adopted the Department of Education and Skills (DES) 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools' and will implement fully and without modification. These Guidelines are based on the 'Children first – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011' and replace previous guidelines issued in 2001 and 2004 respectively. This policy clarifies how our school will implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all children attending our school.

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

- Prevention - curriculum provision
- Procedures - procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- Practice - best practice in child protection

All disclosures will be documented, dated and kept on file by the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). All disclosures will be treated in a highly confidential manner.

The Board of Management has appointed the Principal Teacher, Rosemary Lynch as the DLP in the school to have specific responsibility for child protection.

The Deputy Principal has been appointed as Deputy DLP to take the place of the DLP if unavailable.

## **2.0 SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY AND ETHOS**

Central to Blessington Educate Together National School is the fostering of a respectful atmosphere that informs all school policies as well as everyday school life. This offers a framework within which positive techniques of motivation and encouragement are utilised by all partners in the children's education.

Our school operates under the direct patronage of Educate Together. The four underlying principles of our ethos are:

- Co-educational
- Child-centred
- Multi denominational
- Democratically run

## **3.0 AIMS**

- To create a safe, trusting, responsive environment.
- To raise awareness of the importance of child protection (emotional, physical, sexual and neglect) among all school staff (including teachers, special needs assistants, secretary, etc).

- To put in place clear procedures for all school personnel dealing with suspicions and allegations of child abuse.
- To identify curricular content and resources, that contribute to the prevention of child abuse and to enable children to properly deal with abuse if it occurs.
- To promote the welfare of all the pupils in our care.

## **4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **4.1 BLESSINGTON EDUCATE TOGETHER NATIONAL SCHOOL**

- 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 staff 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.

### **4.2 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

- The Board of Management has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of all children in the school.
- Providing ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff.
- Appointing the Principal as the DLP and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP (in the Principals absence).
- Will ensure this policy is provided to all school personnel, the Parents Association (PA) and to parents on request.
- Ensure the name of the DLP is displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance of the school.
- Ensure this policy undergoes yearly review and the outcome of the review published to the school community.

### **4.3 DESIGNATED LIASION PERSON**

- The DLP for the school is the primary contact point in all dealings with health boards, An Garda Síochána and other parties, in connection with allegations of abuse.
- The DLP, or nominated replacement, should immediately inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management of the school that a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the relevant health board.
- In addition to informing the Board of Management of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE,

the DLP shall also inform the school authority of cases where the advice was sought from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each Board of Management meeting the principal's report shall include the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the board meeting.

#### **4.4 SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

- All school personnel have a duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.

#### **5.0 PREVENTION – SCHOOL POLICIES**

In addition to this policy the BETNS has a number of other policies that are relevant to child protection and are enforced at the school. These are:

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-bullying policy
- Internet safety: acceptable use policy
- Personal electronic devices: acceptable use policy
- Supervision policy
- Garda vetting policy
- Parental involvement policy

#### **6.0 PREVENTION – CURRICULUM PROVISION**

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 schools' Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

On enrolment of their child, Parents/Guardians 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. The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

In addition, the Walk Tall Programme and the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme will be taught in the context of the SPHE programme.

The Learn Together Programme will also enhance the children's learning regarding Personal safety.

## **7.0 PROCEDURES – DEALING WITH CONCERNS / DISCLOSURES**

The procedures for dealing with allegations suspicions/disclosures of Child Abuse as are set down in the DES ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools’ and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs ‘Children first – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011’

## **8.0 PRACTICE – BEST PRACTICE IN CHILD PROTECTION**

### **8.1 PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult. While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining it’s 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 where they can do for themselves.

### **8.2 SUPERVISION**

Every effort will be made to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children throughout the school day. A roster of staff on duty will be drawn up and displayed in the staff room. Teachers will ensure that the children are visible in the schoolyard. Children will not leave the schoolyard or engage with adults outside of the schoolyard. During dry days children are not permitted to spend break times in the classrooms.

#### **8.2.1 WET DAY ARRANGEMENTS**

The children remain in their classroom. Teachers who were scheduled to supervise continue to do so and additional teachers/support staff also supervise. A record of wet day duty is kept and all teachers do an equal share of this supervision.

### **8.3 VISITORS**

The school doors are locked at 9:20 am each morning. After this time, entry is only possible by ringing the doorbell. All unscheduled visitors to the school are expected to report the office on arrival. Staff on yard duty will be aware of visitors entering the schoolyard and direct them to the school office. The drop-off/pick-up of children throughout the teaching day will be processed through the school office. Visitors should never be left alone with the children. Staff must report to the principal, any unauthorised visits or attempts.

#### **8.4 BULLYING**

Bullying behaviour is addressed under our Anti-Bullying Policy. If the behaviour involved is of a sexualised nature or regarded as being particularly abusive, the matter will be referred to the DLP.

#### **8.5 BEHAVIOUR**

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and to show respect for themselves and others as detailed in the schools Code of Behaviour.

#### **8.6 TOILETS**

Children may use the toilets at any time with a teacher's permission. The class teacher uses their own discretion re the number of children permitted out at the same time. Each teacher is mindful of safety when allowing children out to use the toilets. Children who need to use the toilet during yard time must seek the permission of the teacher on duty.

- If a child has a wetting accident during the school day, a staff member will assist them if necessary to change into dry clothes. Before assisting the child the staff member will inform a second staff member and the second person will remain in the room adjoining the toilet area. Alternatively, the child may be taken to the school office.
- It is school policy to call a Parent/Guardian if a child soils themselves in school and requires intimate care. In the unlikely event of failing to make contact staff will follow the procedures as above. All accidents of this nature will be reported to Parents/Guardians.

#### **8.7 SPECIFIC TOILETING / INTIMATE CARE NEEDS**

In all situations where a child needs assistance with toileting /intimate care a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between the parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, principal and if appropriate the child. 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 agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.

Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

If any child in the school requires intimate care, the procedures involved will be in keeping with best practice, keeping the best interests of the child to the fore and maintaining the child's personal dignity.

## **8.8 STAFF CARS**

In rare instances where a staff car must be used to transport a child, children will never be taken alone.

## **8.9 SCHOOL TOURS / TRIPS**

School staff accompanying children on school tours/trips (including after school activities) will deliver a duty of care commensurate with the trip/venue. The higher the risk factor the higher the number of teachers/responsible adults involved. Hired buses/vehicles must provide safe transportation and a functioning seatbelt for every child/adult.

## **8.10 INDUCTION OF TEACHERS AND ANCILLARY STAFF**

It is the responsibility of the Principal teacher or deputy to inform all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Children Protection Guidelines.

## **8.11 ATTENDANCE**

School attendance is monitored carefully. The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) will be informed of any concerns relating to a child's attendance. A letter will be issued to parents when their child has missed 15 days/20days. Children who miss 20 days or more will be reported to the NEWB in accordance with legislation.

## **8.12 ONE-TO-ONE TEACHING**

Parents/Guardians will be made aware when one-to-one teaching is in the best interests of the child. Written consent is required for all one-to-one teaching. Where possible, children in Learning Support/Resource will be taught in small groups. The door to the room will be left open if a teacher is alone with a child. No member of school staff will ever be alone with a child where the room door is closed.

## **9.0 POLICY REVIEW**

- BETNS will review this policy on an annual basis or when child protection legislation is updated, whichever is the sooner. A checklist will be used for this purpose and this is detailed in Appendix A.
- The school will put in place a plan of action to address any areas for improvement identified by the review.
- The Board of Management will inform school personnel that the review has been undertaken and written notification will be provided to the PA.
- A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available to Educate Together and the Department of Education and Skills if requested.