



ST. CLARE'S COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY.

St. Clare's Comprehensive School recognises its obligation to protect its students from abuse or from the risk of abuse. We as a staff have regard to the following.

- ❑ The welfare of the student is paramount
- ❑ The right to confidentiality for students, parents and staff must be respected
- ❑ Information will only be shared in the interest of the student's welfare
- ❑ Responsibility for Child protection rests with the North Western Health Board and with the Educational Welfare Board
- ❑ We are guided by the Educational Welfare Act, the Education Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.

Abuse may take a number of forms e.g. neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse, emotional abuse. See appendix one for fuller definitions.

Children may be abused by a family member, carer, friend or a stranger who may be an adult or themselves a child.

Procedures to be followed when abuse is reported or suspected

Staff should

- ❑ Be alert to the signs of abuse
- ❑ Be familiar with the procedures to be followed in cases where there are concerns that abuse may be taking place
- ❑ Create an atmosphere in which students can express their concerns in confidence

- ❑ Respond in a tactful and sensitive manner.
- ❑ Listen compassionately
- ❑ Not question the child unless something is unclear.
- ❑ Should record the disclosure immediately.
- ❑ Make the child aware that the disclosure will be reported to the DLP.

Record Keeping:

- ❑ Keep a written record
- ❑ Describe in detail signs of physical injury
- ❑ Quote the words used by the child.
- ❑ The record of the discussion should be signed and dated and given to the DLP.

N.B. Do not investigate the matter yourself

Trust your judgement rather than fear over-reaction. Non-reporting may have more serious consequences. Marginal decisions must be made in favour of the student.

All concerns should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person (The Principal).

REPORTING OF CONCERNS

If the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or the allegation he/she will report the matter to the Health board immediately.

- ❑ A written report will be made to the Duty Social Worker
- ❑ The Parent/Guardian will be informed if the child will not be endangered by the action.
- ❑ A record of the information given will be kept and of the reasons if the parents/guardians are not informed
- ❑ The Board of Management will be informed
- ❑ If a Duty Officer is not available the Garda may be informed.

Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

Physical	Behavioural/Developmental
Bruising	Aggressive/Withdrawn
Repeated injury	Regressive behaviour
Torn/Bloodstained clothing	Distrust of adults/Excessive attachment
Burns/Scalds	Drop in academic performance
Bites	Inappropriate sexual behaviour/ language
Fractures	Poor attendance
Marks from implements	Reluctance to go home

A cluster or pattern of these symptoms is the most reliable sign of abuse. However one or more be the result of other factors.

Guidelines for staff

Staff should maintain a professional relationship with students at all times.

Physical contact with a student should be avoided.

Where one to one contact with students has to take place make sure that the Principal is aware.

Staff should guard against using actions or words that may be construed as being abusive.

Complaints against a member of staff

If a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a student is being abused by another member of staff the Principal should be informed.

- ❑ A written record of the disclosure should be made.
- ❑ See Reporting Concerns
- ❑ The member of staff will be informed of the fact, nature of the allegation and of the following procedure
- ❑ A written copy of the allegation will be given to the staff member
- ❑ The staff member will be offered the chance to respond to the allegation in writing.
- ❑ This will be passed on to the Health Board.
- ❑ On the advice of the Health Board/Garda the staff member may be directed to absent himself/herself from school with immediate effect
- ❑ This absence will not imply any degree of guilt

BULLYING: SEE POLICY