

Child Protection Policy

*Coláiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College,
Doughiska,
Galway City.*



Ratified by the Board of Management
on 2nd March, 2017.

*This Policy has been prepared in consultation with Parents, Students, Staff and
the Board of Management*

INTRODUCTION:

The Board of Management of Coláiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College has adopted the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and Procedures in relation to Child Protection and Welfare. This policy clarifies how our school proposes to implement these guidelines in order to ensure the protection and welfare of all students attending our school.

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Coláiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College has agreed the following child protection policy:

The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.

LINK TO MISSION STATEMENT:

Coláiste Mhuirlinne's / Merlin's College's aim is to foster an environment of respect, integrity and positive learning in a safe and enjoyable setting.

We aim to protect the wellbeing of students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Schools which have a good network of relationships, where there is a concern for the whole person throughout the life of the school, will be in a better position to respond to child protection and or welfare concerns.

The staff, parents and management of Coláiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child protection guidelines.

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

- Awareness- curriculum provision and staff training
- Procedures- procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- Practice

An individual copy of this policy document and the appended section from the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff.

It is incumbent on all staff to familiarize themselves with 'Children First' National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of children 2011 and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

AIMS:

In its policies, practices and activities Coláiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare: The school will:

- 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 workers 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; and
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

AWARENESS: Policies, Practices and activities.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is timetabled as part of the junior cycle core curriculum. SPHE provides students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. In particular, the module on Personal Safety focuses on the development of personal awareness and skills for self-protection – protection from assault or attack and protection from harassment or abusive behaviour. The module also deals with how to get help in the event of a threat or an assault, or even an anxiety about someone’s behaviour or attitude. SPHE plays an important role in helping students recognise situations in which their personal safety might be threatened as well as providing them with the knowledge and skills to deal with unsafe, threatening or abusive situations.

Awareness and education also occurs during regular Assemblies, counselling sessions and through invited speakers for students, parents and teachers.

All students are made familiar with the school’s Code of Positive Behaviour Policy which strives to keep children safe and protect them from harmful behaviour. Students are also shown how the school’s Anti- Bullying Policy works, who to refer to and how.

All teachers/ SNA’s have received and will continue to receive training on the Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools and the Children First Guidelines. (It must be noted that this training is in any given time or academic year. The school will assist in providing training as it acknowledges that new members of staff join regularly and that permanent members will continually need refresher training).

PROCEDURES:

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in ‘Children First’ and the Department of Education and Science document, ‘Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures’.

All staff has been issued with a copy of the ‘Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures’ and have received appropriate training. Training will be ongoing taking into account the number of new teachers and SNA’s both to the profession and the school and who may need training. All parents will be informed of our Guidelines and procedures which will be displayed on the school website and also given to the parents association.

Designated Liaison Person/ Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr. John Cleary, Principal.
- The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Ms. Sinead Farragher, Deputy Principal. The name of the DLP is displayed outside the school office door.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- All concerns/ disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate).
- Any individual who has child protection concerns should report their concerns to the DLP.
- Each report to the DLP will be recorded, dated and signed by the person making that report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse will only be given on a ‘need to know’ basis.
- Upon receipt of a report or concern, the DLP will complete a written report and forward it to TUSLA Child Protection Services and/ or An Gardaí. A copy of this report will also be given to the school authority, namely the CEO of GRETB; this report will be marked private and confidential and is for the CEO’s information only. The DLP may seek advice from TUSLA Child Protection Services in advance of completing the report and forwarding it to the relevant authorities.
- If the concern reported to the DLP relates to a child, the parents/legal guardians of the child will be informed, unless by doing so, puts the child at risk.
- The DLP will inform the school authority of cases where the DLP sought advice from TUSLA and as a result of this advice, no report was made.
- **It is the role of TUSLA/ Gardaí to investigate all reports made to them.**
- 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.

NB: *The Protocol Authorising immediate action under section 5.2 of the Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools is a function of the Chief Executive Officer of GRETB, Mr. David Leahy.*

Outlined below are just some practice and organisational issues that arise in relation to Child Protection that arise during any school year. They will be added to and amended on a continual basis and approved with the school’s Board of Management and GRETB.

Scope of Policy:

This policy applies to all members of the school community at Coláiste Mhuirínne/ Merlin College.

Supervision:

A process is in place to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of students throughout the school day. A roster of staff on duty will be drawn up and displayed in the administration area/staff room.

Visitors:

All unscheduled visitors to the school are expected to report the office on arrival. Staff on supervision will be aware of visitors entering the school and direct them to the school office. The drop-off/pick-up of students throughout the teaching day will be processed through the school office. All students must sign in and out of the school if arriving after 9am or leaving before the end of the school day.

Bullying:

Bullying behaviour will be 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.

This is dealt with under the schools Anti Bullying Policy.

Behaviour:

Students are to be encouraged at all times to show respect for themselves and others. Our Code of Positive Behaviour clarifies this. Good standards of behaviour are demanded and expected at all times. Our Code of Positive Behaviour is published in students Journal and is available on our website www.merlincollege.ie.

Staff Cars

Should the occasion arise where a staff car must be used to transport a student, students will never be taken alone. Appropriate arrangements will be put in place to ensure the safety of students.

One to One tuition:

In instances where 1-to-1 tuition or a meeting is being held the room door will generally be left open or if this is noise prohibitive there will be a glass panel in such doors.

Team coaches and PE Staff:

Team coaches and PE staff should not enter the changing rooms of students of the opposite sex as a rule. If they are to enter they should do so with prior approval of a staff member/coach/ parent of the same sex as the students if they need to address the students. If they are to enter the changing rooms after a class they should knock on the door to ensure that all students have left first and give sufficient prior warning that they are about to enter the changing rooms.

School Tours/Trips:

School staff accompanying students on school tours/trips (including after school sporting events/Extra Curricular Activities) will deliver a duty of care in compliance with the Child Protection Policy of the school. Appropriate supervisory arrangements will be put in place.

Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff:

It is the responsibility of the DLP to inform all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Children First and Child Protection Guidelines.

Vetting:

All staff employed by GRET B are Garda vetted. It is the responsibility of the Human Resources department of GRET B to ensure that staff have been vetted. Staff members employed by Get Fresh Catering are vetted by the Human Resources of GRET B. Student teachers are vetted by their respective Universities before being allowed on teaching practice. They will present evidence of Garda clearance to the school authorities. Procedures for Garda Vetting, including those students over 16 years of age on work experience and working with children will adhere to the Department of Education's procedures for Vetting contained in Circular 0031/2016

Use of images of students:

The use of images plays an important role in many aspects of work with children and young people. Images in many formats can be used to record, document, demonstrate, promote and celebrate activities and experiences. Increasingly accessible and diverse technology has meant that recording, sharing, disseminating and publicising images is more widespread than ever before, and this practice will undoubtedly continue and expand.

Concerns about misuse of images have also grown and for this reason guidelines on good practice have been formulated to help organisations to use images in ways that respect privacy and do not expose children or young people to unnecessary risk.

- Students and their parents/carers will be informed in advance if and when images will be taken and their consent sought for image retention and use. This process is known as informed consent. This occurs upon admission to the school in first year and is part of the application process.
- In general, individual students should not be identified, with the exception being where they are being publicly acknowledged (e.g., an award, performance, achievement) for which consent has been given.
- The guidelines of this schools internet policy will be adhered to.

The above is in line Data Protection for Schools Guidelines.

Attendance:

School attendance is monitored carefully. Attendance Certificates will be awarded at the end of each year to students who achieve full attendance. The NEWB will be informed of any concerns relating to a child's attendance. We will issue a letter to parents when their child has missed 20 days. Students who miss 20 days or more will be reported to the NEWB in accordance with legislation.

CONTACTS SHEET:

A list of names and numbers of key personnel and organisations that can assist with Child Protection Concerns will be available. *See Appendix A*

REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY:

The implementation, monitoring and review of this policy will be a done by senior management in conjunction with the staff, parents and the board of management on an annual basis. A checklist to be used in undertaking the review is included at **Appendix D**. The school must put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review. The Board of Management shall make arrangements to inform school personnel that the review has been undertaken. Written notification, that the review has been undertaken shall be provided to the Parents' Association (or where none exists directly to parents). A record of the review and its outcome shall be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

[date]

Signed:

Signed:

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal

Date:

Date:

Date of next review:

Appendix A

Key Contacts For Child Protection Policy

Oranmore Garda 091-388030

(Station)

Garda Millstreet 091-538000

Area Manager for Child Protection

&

Child Welfare Services TUSLA West: Telephone: (091) 546228

Galway City, Social Work Department,
Local Health Office, 25
Newcastle Road, Galway.

Telephone: (091) 546366

Oughterard Social Work Department,
Health Centre,
Oughterard, Co.
Galway.

Telephone: (091) 552200

Appendix B

Guidance Notes for Child protection Case Conferences and Reports

The child's personal details:

- Name, date of birth, address, school and class.

Academic performance - to include:

- Level of attainment
- Changes noticed in academic performance
- Strengths, weaknesses and achievements
- Overall assessment of general performance

Behaviour - including significant changes in behaviour:

- in classroom
- in social areas of the school

Social skills :

- Interactions with peers
- Interactions with adults

School issues:

- To what extent is the young person disposed to avail of what the school has to offer?
- Are you aware of any supports the young person has to sustain and support his/her interest in school (consider home, school, friends and community)?

Please comment on any concerns noted by you or your colleagues about this child, especially with regard to injuries, bruising, sexually inappropriate behaviour...etc.

If any other children of this family are, or have been known to your school, please note any Particular concerns about these children too.

Please include any additional comments or observations.

Please print your name, sign and date any reports and include contact details of the school.

It is recommended you mark your report "strictly private and confidential" and include a line at the end to effect that "this report is written without prejudice".

Appendix C

Standard Form for Reporting Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL:

In case of Emergency or outside TUSLA office hours, contact should be made with An Garda Síochána, To
Principal Social Worker/Designate Community Care Services, 25 Newcastle Rd., Galway.

1. Details of Child:

Name: _____ Male: Female:

Address:

Age / D.O.B.:

School:

Name of Mother: _____ Name of Father: _____

Address of Mother if different to Child: Address of Father if different to Child:

Telephone Number: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Care and Custody arrangements regarding child, if known:

Household Composition:

Definition and Indicators of Child Abuse

2.1 Four Types of Child Abuse:

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical and sexual abuse.

(i) Definition of Neglect:

Neglect can be defined in terms of 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 and medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and /or development are severely affected.

(ii) Definition of Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver 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 are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become the norm in the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- a.** Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- b.** Where the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his/her behaviour
- c.** Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectation of a child
- d.** Premature imposition of responsibility of a child
- e.** Over or under protection of the child
- f.** Failure to provide opportunities for the child's education and development
- g.** Use of unrealistic or over-harsh disciplinary measures
- h.** Exposure to domestic violence

(iii) Definition of Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child (e.g. shaking, use of excessive force in handling, deliberate poisoning, suffocation, Munchausen's syndrome by proxy¹ and allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child).

(iv) Definition of Sexual Abuse²

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. For further details on child sexual abuse, please see section 3.5.1 (Page 14) of the National Guidelines for Protection and Welfare of Children 1999.

¹ Where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness.

² The definition of child sexual abuse presented here is not a legal definition, and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

2.2 Other Forms of Abusive Behaviour:

Apart from the above very serious forms of abuse, staff and volunteers should also be on the alert for other forms of abusive behaviour:

(i) Peer Abuse:

In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In these situations the Child Protection Procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser. If there is any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance

Bullying:

Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour, which occurs, mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children. Bullying of a child by an adult is categorised as Emotional Abuse and must be reported to TUSLA Child Protection Services /An Gardaí.

Examples of bullying include; teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, extortion. While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and should be reported to TUSLA or An Garda Síochána), dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of the School/Centre where it is taking place. Each School/Centre must have an anti-bullying policy. Please visit our website www.merlincollege.ie to view this document.