

PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Purpose

All children and staff are treated with dignity and respect and have the right to have their needs met in a safe environment.

- To ensure the safety of the child is paramount.
- To provide teachers with guidelines so that they can identify signs of abuse or neglect.
- To provide guidelines for everybody working with children from this school.
- To provide procedures for dealing with cases of abuse or neglect.
- To provide guidelines of which help agencies will be used, interview procedures and how parents or caregivers will be informed.

Guidelines

- Adults will be receptive and sensitive to children so that the children feel listened to and believed.
- The school will use the most appropriate agency for sexual abuse and the most appropriate agency for physical abuse and/or neglect, which is the Special Education Service.
- In the case of a report from a third party to the school, the first course of action will be the school will direct the third party to a helping agency without becoming involved and Special Education Services will be informed. The school may be involved at a later date.
- Keeping ourselves safe and self esteem units will be taught as part of the Health Curriculum to increase children's assertive skills in dealing with uncomfortable situations, and to help raise teachers' consciousness of the issues.
- Parents will be informed except where the student's welfare is likely to be threatened. Whichever agency is involved in the cases will be responsible for informing parents as they have the skills to handle the situation in the most appropriate way to support the child.
- Members of the Group Special Education Service and senior staff will be the resource people in this area. Teachers who have concerns may discuss them with any one of these resource people. No outside agency will be involved without the prior knowledge of the Principal.
- The guidelines and procedures adopted in the Police Vetting Policy (NAG 6) also apply to this policy.
- If a student has been identified as an abuser, then it is important that the school seeks professional advice to ensure the safety of all other students at the school. This may mean the school providing an interim "minder service" (at schools expense) to that student, until the situation is clarified.

Procedures

- 1 Teachers will use anecdotal notes to help identify children possibly at risk. Student concerns will be dated and kept specific.
- 2 Individual profiles are already kept on children. These will include dated observations on social development. The Principal is to collate a master file when required.
- 3 Keeping in mind children's welfare is paramount. Parents may be consulted about changes in behaviour to try to identify a reason. It may be caused by a change in the family's home circumstances.
- 4 All information/discussions will be confidential to the staff involved. Data will be stored in one place known to the senior staff. In the event of the child leaving, relevant information will be forwarded to the new school or agency.
- 5 Where a teacher is concerned about a child they may discuss it with the Principal or Senior Staff. If further investigation or action is felt necessary, the Principal will contact appropriate agencies.
- 6 Once an agency has been involved, that agency and where appropriate the Police, will investigate and the school will act on the advice from those agencies.
- 7 Whenever an interview is held with a child, an adult on the staff whom the child has confidence in must be present. The welfare of the child must be first priority and wherever that is compromised the interview must be terminated. Any staff members attending such interviews would need to have the ability to make this judgement.
- 8 Support for staff and the child concerned will be sought from the agency involved.
- 9 In case of media involvement, the Board of Trustees would decide who would handle public statements. No other staff are to comment.