

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Réalt Na Mara G.N.S. 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. The Board of Management of Réalt na Mara has adopted the "Children First" Guidelines of the Department of Health & Children 1999 and the "Child Protection" Procedures of the Department of Education & Science 2001.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The Principal will act as DLP. Should circumstances warrant it, the Deputy Principal shall act as 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.

Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse

All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse.

These are:

- . Considering the possibility
- . Looking out for signs of abuse
- . Recording of information

Handling Disclosures from Children

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.

This information should then be passed onto the DLP and a record will be retained in the school.

If the reporting person or member of the school staff and the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion/allegation, the procedures for reporting as laid out in 'Children First' – Section 4.4 pg 38 (Appendix 10) will be adhered to.

The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed before the DLP makes contact with the relevant authorities unless the situation demands that more immediate action to be taken for the safety of the child in which case the Chairman may be informed after the report has been submitted.

Any Professional who suspects child abuse should inform parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and a duty social worker is unavailable, an Garda Síochána should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Health Board intervention.

ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

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 office. 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. Children are not permitted to spend break times unsupervised in the classrooms.

Visitors 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.

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.

Behaviour Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and to show respect for themselves and others.

Toilets It is school policy that only one child is permitted to enter the toilet area at a time. Children from Junior Infants to Third Class who need to use the toilet during

yard time must seek the permission of the teacher on yard. During yard time, the toilet area closest to the yard will be used.

. If a child has a wetting accident during the school day, the child can go the toilet area to change her clothes.

. 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 for (1) above.

All accidents of this nature will be reported to Parents/Guardians.

Staff Cars In rare instances where a staff car must be used to transport a child, children will never be taken alone. Teachers will not assist in the dressing of the child.

School Tours/Trips School staff accompanying children on school tours/trips (including after school sporting events) 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. As per School Tour Policy, hired buses/vehicles must provide safe transportation and a functioning seatbelt for every child/adult.

Swimming Lessons

In line with the policy of our local swimming pool, parents who need to assist their children in changing

before /after a lesson will be required to be identified by a member of the school staff to the swimming pool staff and must sign in before entering the changing area Lead teacher must identify the parent to the swimming staff in advance of each lesson.

Teachers will not assist in the dressing of children before or after the swimming lesson.

Children must use communal changing room plus three adjacent changing cubicles where the teacher can monitor at all times.

Attendance School attendance is monitored carefully. The NEWB will be informed of any concerns relating to a child's attendance. . Children who miss 20 days or more will be reported to the NEWB in accordance with legislation.

One-to One Teaching Parents 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.

Intimate Care If any child in our school requires intimate care the procedures involved with such care will be agreed in consultation with the pupil, their Parents/Guardians and any other personnel involved in the care of the pupil. This is in keeping with best practice, keeps the best interests of the child to the fore and maintains the child's personal dignity. Such procedures, when agreed will be communicated to all parties involved and recorded.

Allegations Against School Employees

The most important consideration for the Chairperson, Board of Management or 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 outlined 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 outlined in will then be followed.

The chairperson of the Board and 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 or 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 measure 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 warrants 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 members 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 Board of Management: 24/09/2014.

Signed: *John Corbett*

Chairperson, Board of Management