

Child Protection Policy

Child Protection Policy of The Commons National 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 The Commons N.S. has agreed the following child protection policy:

1. 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.
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Joe Cannon.
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Emer Rose.
4. In its policies, practices and activities, The Commons N.S. 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.

5. The Stay Safe Programme is the primary resource used to provide education for pupils on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the school's SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection (Personal Safety).

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 lessons of the programme will be taught to classes from Senior Infants to Sixth.

Ms Kathleen Boyle, under her Special Duties Post, has responsibility for the management of the Stay Safe Programme in the school.

Considerations

The teaching of Stay Safe in multi-class and multicultural settings will be age appropriate and culture sensitive.

The Stay Safe pack for children with learning difficulties will be used in teaching Stay Safe to special needs pupils. S.E.T. and special needs assistants will support the teaching of Stay Safe. Information meetings for parents / guardians and members of the Board of Management will be arranged on a needs basis as will training for school staff.

Parents / guardians wishing to withdraw their children must put the request in writing to the Principal. These children will be placed in another classroom during Stay Safe lessons/ will be collected by parents/guardians before lessons begin if all classes are doing stay safe at the same time.

Procedures

All staff (teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff, secretarial, caretaking etc.) will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) and the Department of Education and Skills document, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2011).

Practice

Child Protection Practices

The staff and BoM of this school have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to Child Protection. Following discussion and consultation, the staff and BoM have agreed that the following practices be adopted:

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 its 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 that they can do for themselves.

School personnel should never engage in or allow:

The use of inappropriate language or behaviours.

Physical punishment of any kind.

Sexually provocative games or suggestive comments about or to a child.

The use of sexually explicit or pornographic material.

All media products (CDs, DVDs etc.) should be checked for their appropriateness with regard to age and suitability.

Visitors/Guest Speakers

Appropriately appointed and screened visiting teachers of varying disciplines, engaged by the BoM of The Commons National School, to perform specific duties, will be left work with a class alone at the Principal's discretion.

Visitors/Guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school (Principal/ teachers) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use is appropriate.

Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs

In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care, a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents/guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, Principal and if appropriate the pupil. 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.

Toileting accidents

Clean underwear and suitable clothing will be kept in the school so that if a pupil has an 'accident' of this nature, they will in the first instance be offered fresh clothing into which they can change.

If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents/guardians cannot be contacted, the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In all such situations, two members of staff should be present. A record of all such incidents will be kept and Principal and parents will be notified.

Accidents

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Statement to ensure the safety of children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be noted in our Incident book and will be addressed under our Accident Policy as part of Health and Safety.

One-to-one teaching

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching can sometimes be in the best interest of the child.

Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment.

Parents of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought.

Work being carried out by Special Needs Assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

Changing for games/PE/Swimming

Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for Games/PE/Swimming. Where assistance is needed, this will be done in the communal area and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will members of staff/volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child unsupervised in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required, the parents/guardians of the child will be asked to assist the child. The Commons National School will endeavour to have two male volunteers/member of staff in the male changing area and two female members of staff/ volunteers in the female changing area.

The BOM of The Commons National School has requested that all swimming volunteers apply to be vetted. In the interim, a Volunteer Form approved by the CPSMA will be in use. At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils. While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable, a full record of the incident should be made and reported to the Principal and parents.

Attendance

Our school attendance will be monitored as per our attendance policy. With regards to child protection, we will pay particular attention to trends in non-attendance. We will also monitor non-attendance in correlation with signs of neglect/physical/emotional abuse.

Behaviour

Children are encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and inappropriate behaviour will be addressed under our Code of Behaviour. If an incident occurs which we consider to be of a sexualised nature, we will notify the DLP who will record it and respond to it appropriately.

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, then the matter will be referred to the DLP.

Children travelling in staff cars

Members of the school staff will not carry children alone in their cars at any time.

Communication

Every effort will be made to enhance pupil-teacher communication. If pupils have concerns they will be listened to sympathetically. The SPHE/Oral Language/RE programmes allow for open pupil-teacher communication, which is hoped will aid the pupil-teacher relationship. If teachers have to communicate with pupils on a one-to-one basis, they are requested to leave the classroom door open or request a colleague to attend. Further details on communications are found in the school's Communication Policy.

Induction of Staff

The DLP will be responsible for informing all new teachers and ancillary staff of the Child Protection Procedures (DES, 2011) and Children First Guidelines (2011), but particularly the recently published

Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011). All new teachers are expected to teach the appropriate SPHE objectives for their class. A member of staff, once trained, will be responsible for the mentoring of new teachers and will be responsible for supporting new teachers as they implement the SPHE objectives.

Induction of Pupils

All parents and children will be made aware of attendance rules and their implications as laid down in the Education Welfare Act (2000). All parents will be informed of the programmes in place in the school that deal with personal development e.g. RSE, Walk Tall, Stay Safe and SPHE. All new parents will be given a copy of the school's enrolment policy, which outlines the procedures parents and children should use when contacting the school if there are absences or concerns of an educational/personal/family matter. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher/principal if they wish to discuss their child's progress. All parents will be given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

Internet Safety

It is the intention of the Principal and Staff at The Commons National School to ensure that child protection concerns will be addressed in the school's Acceptable Use Policy as part of its Information and Communication Technology policy. The Stay Safe lessons in each classroom may be supplemented with appropriate resources. There will also be annual meetings during which parents will be invited to attend a session with an invited speaker to stay abreast of the ever-changing situation regarding internet access.

Record Keeping

Teachers will keep records on each child's reports using The Commons National School Record Keeping Sheets. These records are kept in the drawer of each teacher's desk. Roll books will be updated daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis. All educational files of pupils who no longer attend this school are kept in the filing cabinet in the office. Further details on record keeping will be found in the school's Record Keeping Policy.

Supervision

The school's supervision policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks. A rota will be displayed to cover 11 o'clock and lunchtime breaks. See Supervision Policy for agreed rules around break-times and procedures around teacher absences.

Visibility

Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school playground. Children will not be allowed to spend time in classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision. They are not to leave the school playground or to engage with adults who are outside of the school playground.

The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

6. This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested through the website or on request.

7. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 26/09/2017

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: September 2019