

Child Protection Statement: *Saplings Special School, Rathfarnham*

Schools have an obligation to provide students with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well-being and protect them from harm. School personnel are especially well placed to observe changes in behaviour, failure to develop or outward signs of abuse in children.

- Mindful of this primary and paramount duty of care, the Board of Management of Saplings Special School, Rathfarnham fully endorses "Children First", the designated guidelines for the protection and welfare of children as issued by the Department of Children & Youth Affairs, September 2011. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools" from the Department of Education & Skills, September 2011 as part of this overall child protection policy.
- The Board nominates **Michael Wood** as the designated liaison person (DLP) to act as a liaison with outside agencies such as health board and as a resource person to any staff having child protection concerns.
- In the absence of Michael Wood, **Adeline Wall** will act as Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL).P).
- The Board will ensure that appropriate and on going training as necessary will be available for DLP and the DDL.
- The Board fully endorses arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff as outlined in Circular 0063/2010, for the Department of Education & Skills.
- Recognising that the safety and well being of children attending the school is a priority, the Board undertakes to include Child Protection and Health & Safety matters as items on the agenda of all Board meetings forthwith.
- The Board will ensure that all school staff, teaching and non-teaching are aware of their obligations under the guidelines detailed in Children first and the procedures to be followed in the event of concern.
- The Board recognises that it has two duties of care. The primary duty is the protection, safety and welfare of the children attending Saplings Special School. The Board as an employer also has duties and responsibilities towards its employees.
- As an employer, the Board will seek legal advice if an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee.
- The Board will adhere to the protocol outlined in Ch. 4. "Reporting of Concerns and Role of the Health Service Executive" and Ch.5 "Allegations of Child Abuse regarding School Employees" in "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools" from the Department of Education & Skills, September 2011 to authorise any actions required to protect the children in its care. The Board notes that school employees may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively. The employee should be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry. The Board accepts that the principles of natural justice and fair procedures must be adhered to.

- The Board believes that the personal, social and academic development of children flourishes in a culture where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and appropriate support is available for those in difficulty.
- The Board is committed to the maintenance of the environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to express themselves and are listened to. Where children have communication difficulties staff must be particularly vigilant on their behalf. In addition, opportunities will be included in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to keep them safe following an authorised educational programme to promote and ensure their personal safety.
- The Board undertakes to circulate this Child Protection policy statement to all parents and guardians at time of enrolment and on a regular basis thereafter. This policy statement and "Children First" will be available for viewing at the school office.
- This policy statement regarding Child Protection at Saplings Special School applies to all staff, members of the Board of Management, volunteers and contractors working in the school.
- This policy statement will be subject to review at the start of each academic year forthwith.

Signed  Chairperson

 DLP

_____ Deputy DLP