

SAFEGUARDING

The Government is keen to bring together the various strands relating to the welfare and well being of children and young people. There is a duty on Governing Bodies to ensure there are suitable arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the pupils in their school.

This work is not to be done in isolation and the Guidance document (DfES/0027/2004) identifies the roles of a variety of agencies, including Local Education Authorities, but this summary is primarily for Governors.

Governing Bodies should ensure that there are appropriate (agreed with local agencies by following Local Education Authority guidelines) child protection policy and procedures in place. All staff must know these procedures and it is suggested that refresher training should take place every 3 years.

There should be a senior member of staff who is designated lead person for the school in relation to child protection issues. This person must be suitably trained and it is proposed that they should have refresher training every 2 years.

There must be procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff. Again these need to be known and understood by all. It is important that staff are able to understand what can happen in the event of an allegation being made.

The school needs to follow the necessary checks before appointing any member of staff. This includes the use of volunteers.

The Governors must be willing to make any necessary changes to its policy or procedures in relation to child protection arrangements should they be identified. The policies need to be reviewed on an annual basis and the Governors need to be able to report to the Local Education Authority on how the duties have been discharged.

However the welfare of children is about far more than the child protection element. All policies, as they are reviewed, need to have a focus on how they help to promote the welfare of pupils. Many schools will already doing this but it is important that this element becomes explicit. Parents need to know that the welfare of their child is of prime importance to the school. It is for this reason that we organise so much of school life; healthy eating, extra games and PE sessions, elements of the school curriculum like PSHE. In other words the value we place on each and every individual to help them to fulfil the gifts given to them by God in a safe and secure environment.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR THE GOVERNORS TO CONSIDER

1. Do we state clearly in our prospectus that the welfare and safety of our pupils is of paramount importance?
2. Do we have very high standards in relation to this area?
3. Are these standards reflected in our spending plans? E.g. in our building plan we are re-surfacing the playground because that is more important than painting the south side of the school and we cannot afford both.
4. Do the Governors know who are the responsible people for child protection in the school? Is there one Governor who has this area of responsibility on behalf of the Governing Body? Are these people able to attend appropriate training sessions, including refresher courses?
5. Do the staff know who are "the responsible people" and what is expected of them as individual members of the school community? Have they had the appropriate training and are there plans for future training?
6. Is this recognised as a whole school issue? Do all staff appreciate that they have a duty to be part of this agenda?
7. Do we get enough information to be able to make a judgement about how well our school is doing?

Do you realise just how grateful the Catholic community are for all the work you do? On behalf of all at the Schools' Commission thank you very much indeed.