

Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs' *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, places a duty on children's service providers to protect children in their care. At Grace Park Montessori, paramount importance is placed on ensuring that the child's welfare is protected at all times.

We aim to provide a service where everyone can feel safe and secure and where no one suffers neglect or abuse of any kind. All children have the right to such protection.

This Policy reflects the legal framework provided in the *Child Care Act, 1991* and the *Children First Act, 2015*. *The Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 2006* and the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017* also stipulate that services develop clear written guidelines on identifying and reporting child abuse.

Under the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017*, Grace Park Montessori Pre-School is a '**Mandated Person**' and is thus subject to the mandatory obligations to report mandated concerns as defined therein.

2. Definitions /Glossary

At Grace Park Montessori the definitions of Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse are consistent with those set out in: *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017*.

Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful. The giving of information to the appropriate people for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality. It must be clearly understood that information that is gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without contacting the person who provided that information. Anyone who receives information from colleagues about possible or actual abuse must treat it as having been given in confidence.

3. Policy Statement

Environment

We do all that is possible to ensure that we provide a place where everyone can feel safe and secure and in which no one suffers neglect or abuse of any kind. We are guided in this regard by the **Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017**.

We will ensure that everyone is supported and heard and that all staff understand their respective responsibilities.

Training on child protection is provided and is compulsory for all staff members.

4. Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

Grace Park Montessori is a '**mandated person**' pursuant to Schedule 2 Article 15 (g) of the Children First Act, 2015. As a mandated person, it is required by law to report 'any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed'.

'**Harm**' is defined as assault, ill treatment, neglect or sexual abuse and it covers single and multiple instances.

The **threshold of harm, at which a report must be made to Tusla**, is reached when Grace Park Montessori (its servants or agents) **knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where the child's health, development or welfare has been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.**

It is, therefore, the **legal responsibility of all staff members** working in this service:

- (i) to report the harm of children (above a defined threshold) to Túsła and
- (ii) to assist Túsła if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

In cases of emergency the Garda Síochána will be contacted.

Relevant parents/carers will be kept informed and appropriate confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

If a member of staff is suspected or accused of abuse, the matter will be addressed immediately and other users of the service will be protected. In some instances, this may mean the suspension of staff from duty.

It is our responsibility to report suspicions and/or allegations but it is not the responsibility of this childcare service or its staff to carry out investigations. This is the role of Túsla and the Garda Síochána.

In making any report, regard must be had to the following:

- The protection and safety of the child is paramount
- The principles of natural justice must be observed
- Confidentiality must be maintained and disclosure is made on a need to know basis.

5. Designated Person with Responsibility for Child Protection

Responsibility for child protection and welfare issues is delegated to a nominated senior staff member, the Directress, who is:

Ms Jozefa Chrobak, Directress, 74 Grace Park Heights, Dublin 9. Tel: 01 8368301

The Directress is responsible for ensuring that all staff members know who the Designated Child Protection Person is.

Ms Jozefa Chrobak, Directress, 74 Grace Park Heights, Dublin 9. Tel 01 8368301

All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse will be shared on 'a need to know' basis in the best interests of the child (Children First, 2017)

6. Safeguards

Care is monitored throughout the day to minimise the risk of child abuse or neglect.

We will ensure that:

- All workers are suitable to work with children.
- All workers are carefully selected and appropriately vetted.
- All workers are adequately supervised.

Training on child protection is provided and is compulsory for all staff members.

Staff members are provided with support in the form of training, regular supervision and opportunities to discuss with the manager, any concern in relation to a child or family - a concern is never too trivial.

7. Principles Guiding Procedures & Practices

The following *Basic Principles of Child Protection Practice in Early Years Settings* will apply:

- The welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- There is respect for children in their ordinary physical care. As appropriate, information should be shared with children, their opinions should be sought and encouraged and their growing abilities to care for themselves should be acknowledged. It is a requirement of Grace Park Montessori that children are toilet trained. The level of contact around intimate care should be sensitively dealt with and a child's need for privacy in the toilet, for example, should be respected in accordance with his or her self-care abilities. All workers should be guided by individual children in reasonable expressions of affection (see Interactions Policy)
- Children have a right to be listened to, heard and taken seriously. Adults should also be aware of a child's body language. Children's concerns and feelings will be respected. Their questions will always be answered in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development
- Families have a right to be respected and consulted in relation to their child's welfare.
- Equally, staff have the right to be respected by families and parents and addressed, courteously, by parents of children in the pre-school. In the interests of all concerned, communications from parents to staff must be conducted, respectfully, and in a manner that values their professionalism. Parents are also required to appreciate the full panoply of staff responsibilities towards *all* children in our care.
- Where there is a conflict of interest between the needs and rights of children and the needs and rights of their parents/carers, the child's needs will prevail, as they are paramount.
- We are committed to working collaboratively with all agencies and disciplines concerned with the protection and welfare of children.
- We will respect confidentiality of information entrusted to us but will not treat as confidential information which needs to be shared to protect children.
- We will always consider factors such as the child's gender, age and stage of development, religion, culture and race in our work.
- We will endeavour to raise awareness in relation to children's welfare and protection among parents, carers, workers and the community generally.
- We will employ 'best practice' in our recruitment and selection policies and practices so as to minimise the risk to children in our services.

- We will employ positive ways of dealing with children's behaviour. Their troublesome or disruptive behaviour will be kept separate from who they are as individuals. Labels or nicknames are prohibited. Safe methods for dealing with children will be applied (see Behaviour Management Policy).

8. Protecting Children During Service Provision

- Each child will be under the care of a specific adult at all times and that adult must know where the child is at all times.
- Children, as a group, will be under the care of a minimum of two adults at all times.
- All entrances are kept secure under the control of staff.
- Parents/carers are permitted access to their children, where the welfare of the child so requires, but for the safety and well-being of all children parents are not permitted to remain throughout the entire duration of a pre-school session.
- Volunteers and students are supervised at all times.
- Lights are left on in all rooms including closets with windows, toilets, offices and storage areas when the building is in use.
- Nothing is placed over windows to prevent or obstruct viewing.
- Children's arrivals and departures are supervised, strictly (see Policy on Authorization to Collect a Child).
- Behaviour policies and practices promote the development of children. Staff must never physically punish or be in any way verbally disrespectful to a child.
- Records are kept accurately and up to date.
- Training on child protection is provided and is compulsory for all staff members.
- Staff are supervised and supported and appraisals are carried out regularly.
- Staff must be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact sports or other activities.
- Physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children who are upset but should only take place in a way that is appropriate and acceptable to the child.
- The personal space, safety and privacy of all individuals in the service are to be respected.

9. Responding to Concerns

If a child hints at or tells a staff member at Grace Park Montessori that he or she is being abused, the staff must handle it sensitively, and in accordance with the *Children First National Guidance, 2017*. The staff member will:

- React calmly.
- Listen carefully and attentively.
- Take the child seriously.
- Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to the staff member.
- Not promise to keep anything secret.
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions.
- Check back with the child that what has been heard is correct and understood.
- Not express any opinion about the alleged abuser.
- Ensure that the child understands, in an age-appropriate manner, the procedures that will be followed.
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible.
- Treat the information, confidentially, subject to the requirement of the 2017 Guidance and relevant legislation.

The information will then be passed on to the designated Child Protection Officer in accordance with this Child Protection Policy.

All observations, discussions, and records relating to child protection concerns must include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information which may be relevant and should be signed and dated.

If a staff member receives information in relation to abuse, they must never indicate that either the information or its source will remain secret.

10. Mandatory Reporting Forms

Where the threshold of harm to a child for the reporting of suspected or actual child abuse has been reached, in accordance with the aforesaid principles, a report will be made to Tusla in person, by telephone or in writing.

The *Standard Reporting Form* will be used for reporting concerns.

**Local Area Office
Dublin North City
Duty Social Work Department,**

**492 North Circular Rd,
Parkview,
Dublin
Phone
8566856**

1.

Office Hours 9am - 5pm

11. Emergency Provision

In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of Tusla staff, a report will be made to An Garda Síochána at:

**Clontarf Garda Station,
43, Clontarf Road, Clontarf,
Dublin 3.
Tel: +353 1 666 4800**

12. Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse

Anyone who reports a suspicion of abuse, provided the report is made in good faith (not maliciously), is protected under the *Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998*.

13. Communication Plan

All parents/carers are informed of the Child Protection Policy on registration. Parents/carers are required to confirm, in writing, that they have read and understood all policies, including this one, and will provide any assistance needed.

A copy of this Policy is available online to staff members and parents/carers and a copy is retained in the Policy Folder located in the classroom.

14. Review Date

This Policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

The person responsible for such review is the Directress.

15. Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Authorization to Collect a Child Policy
- Staff Supervision Policy
- Staff Training Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Recruitment Policy

16. References/Supporting Documents/Related

- *Children First Act, 2015*
- *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017*
- *The Child Care Act, 1991*
- *Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 2006 and Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations, 2006*
- *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998
- The Data Protection Act, 1988 and 2003

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997

17. Contact Information

All queries and requests for further information should be addressed to the Directress of Grace Park Montessori Pre-School:

Ms Jozefa Chrobak, Directress, 74 Grace Park Heights, Dublin 9. Tel 01 8368301

This Policy was last reviewed on the 14th day of January 2023.

Signed:

Jozefa Chrobak

**Ms Jozefa Chrobak
Directress
Grace Park Montessori
74 Grace Park Heights
Dublin 9**

Tel: 01 8368301