

Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish  
Johnstown/Killiney

## **CHILD PROTECTION - CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES**

### *1 Introduction*

New national child protection policies and procedures, *Our Children, Our Church* were launched by the Catholic Bishops of Ireland in December 2005. *Our Children, Our Church* expresses the commitment of the Catholic Church in Ireland to the consistent and determined implementation of up-to-date policies and procedures, which reflect best practice in the area of child protection.

Children and young people are an integral part of the church community. All of us within this community have a responsibility to uphold Gospel values by respecting the dignity and rights of all children and young people and to work together to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

This Code of Behaviour, which is based on *Our Children, Our Church*, will be operative for all who are involved in church activities in the parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Johnstown. **Church workers should familiarise themselves with this Code and also with the content of *Our Children, Our Church*.**

### *2. General Conduct:*

- Physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances.
- Verbal abuse of children or telling jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children can never be acceptable. Great care should be taken if it is necessary to have a conversation regarding sexual matters with a child or young person.
- Being alone with a child or young person is not always wise or appropriate practice. If a situation does arise where it is necessary to be alone with a child, another responsible adult should be informed immediately, by telephone, if necessary. A diary note that the meeting with the young person took place, including the reasons for it, should be made.
- Best practice in relation to travel with children and young people should be observed. Personnel should not undertake any car or minibus journey alone with a child or young person. If, in certain circumstances, only one adult is available there should be a minimum of two children or young people present for the entire journey. In the event of an emergency, where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a child, a record of this should be made and the child's parent or guardian should be informed as soon as possible.
- Children or young people should not be permitted to work or remain in churches, parish property or schools unless there are at least two adults present.
- All children and young people must be treated with equal respect; favouritism is not acceptable.

- Personnel should not engage in or tolerate any behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, that could be construed as bullying or abusive.
- A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular child or group of children.
- Under no circumstances should Church personnel give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
- Alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used by personnel while they are supervising or working with children or young people.
- Only age-appropriate language, material or media products (camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable.

### *3. Respect for physical integrity:*

- The physical integrity of children and young people must be respected at all times.
- Personnel must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind, including tough physical play, physical reprimand and horseplay (tickling, wrestling). This should not prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety of a child.

### *4. Respect for privacy:*

- The right to privacy of children and young people must be respected at all times.
- Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when young people are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets.
- Photographs of children or young people must never be taken while they are in changing areas (e.g., in a locker room or bathing facility)
- Tasks of a personal nature (e.g. Helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be done for children or young people if they can undertake these tasks themselves.

### *5. Meetings with children and young people:*

- If the pastoral care of a child or young person necessitates meeting alone with them, such meetings should not be held in an isolated environment. The times and designated locations for meetings should allow for transparency and accountability (ex, be held in rooms with a clear glass panel or window, in buildings where other people are present, and with the door of the room left open.
- Both the length and the number of meetings should be limited.
- Parents or guardians should be informed that the meeting(s) took place, except in circumstances where to do so might place the child in danger.
- Visits to the home or private living quarters of church personnel should not be encouraged, nor should meetings be conducted in such locations.

- When the need for a visit to the home of a child or young person arises, professional boundaries must be observed at all times.

#### 6. *Children with special needs or disability*

- Children with special needs or disability may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, and so sensitivity and clear communication are particularly important.
- Where it is necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature for a child with special needs, this should be done with the full understanding and consent of parents or guardians.
- In an emergency situation where this type of help is required, parents should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible.

#### 7. *Vulnerable children*

- Since especially vulnerable children may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, sensitivity and clear communication are of utmost importance.
- Church workers should be aware that vulnerable children may be more likely than other children to be bullied or subjected to other forms of abuse, and may also be less clear about physical and emotional boundaries.

#### 8. *Parental consent*

- A signed consent form should be obtained from parents or guardians prior to the participation of children and young people in events, activities or groups.
- Parents should be asked to indicate if their children have any specific dietary requirements, medical needs or special needs.

#### 9. *Record Keeping*

- An accurate record should be kept for each child and young person participating in activities, including, but not limited to attendance, programme details and medical information. This record should include a copy of the consent form or letter signed by the parent or guardian. It should also contain details of emergency contact numbers.

#### 10. *Parish Child Protection representative(s)*

The parish will appoint a Parish Child Protection Representative(s) who will have the following responsibilities:

- To promote awareness of the Church's child protection policies, as outlined in "*Our Children, Our Church*".
- To ensure that the public has ready access to contact details for the Diocesan Director of Child Protection.
- To facilitate anyone in the parish in bringing an allegation or suspicion of child abuse to the attention of the Diocesan Director of Child Protection, should they wish to have such support.

The Parish Child Protection Representative will be appointed by the parish after appropriate consultation and agreement with the diocese. The person appointed should have the personal qualities, interest and life experience fitting to the tasks involved. The Representative need not be a paid employee, nor a professional or expert and is likely to be a lay person. He or she will be given a role specification, be required to undergo training and will be able to draw on expert help and support from the Diocesan Director of Child Protection.

The name and contact details of the Parish Child Protection representative(s) should be made known to everyone in the parish.

#### *11. Complaints procedure*

Any complaint regarding child abuse taking place on parish property, in the course of parish activities or involving parish personnel, lay or clerical, should be reported to each of the following:

- An Garda Síochána, Cabinteely Tel: (01) **665400**
- Health Services Executive - Duty Social Worker, Our Lady's Clinic, Patrick Street, Dún Laoghaire. Tel (01) 2804043
- Director of Dublin Archdiocese Child Protection Service, Mr Philip Garland, Tel: (01) **8842590**

Complaints may be made by children, their parents or any member of the parish concerned about the welfare of our children.

#### *12. Conclusion*

This Code of Behaviour is being issued to all adults who are involved with young people in all church related activities in the parish. It is to be available to all parishioners. The code is also available on the Parish Website, <http://www.johnstownparish.org/>.