

Child Protection Policy of Scoil Oilibhéir

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 Scoil Oilibhéir 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 Mr Aiden O'Brien, Principal Teacher.
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Mrs Ann Harnedy, Deputy Principal.
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Scoil Oilibhéir 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.

5. This section of the Child Protection Policy is used to list school policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to child protection.

Links to other Policies/ Planning areas

Prevention; SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on "Safety and Protection" Stay Safe Programme, The School Code of Behaviour

Procedures: Anti Bullying Policy, Pupil Attendance Strategy
Health and Safety Statement

Practice: Swimming Policy, Supervision Policy

School Tours and Outings c/f Code of Behaviour

In Scoil Oilibhéir all children will be cherished and in fulfilling the general aims of the Revised Primary Curriculum we will:

- *Enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential*
- *Enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society*
- *Prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning*

In endeavouring to realise these aims we will create a positive school climate which is open, inclusive, respectful, fair, democratic and tolerant and which seeks to support the holistic development of all children and all adults working with our children.

A variety of resources including the Stay Safe programme are used in this school to provide education on abuse prevention. These programmes are taught as part of the schools' SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection. The Stay Safe programme, which is now obligatory in all primary schools, will be implemented in its entirety. The programme can be accessed in the office. Class teachers and specialist personnel such as LS, SET, SNA will ensure that the content of the programme is communicated in a way that pupils with SEN can understand.

Procedures, Practices and Activities

All staff (Teachers, SNAs, Ancillary, Secretarial, Caretaking etc) in this school will follow procedures based on Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 available at www.dyca.ie and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which are published in an on-line format which can be accessed on the Department's website at www.education.ie > Child Protection as outlined in Circular 0065/2011

A standard letter regarding the school's policy in relation to reporting of child abuse through neglect, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse is sent to all parents at the beginning of each school year. **(Appendix A)**

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- On-going concerns are reported to Ms. Miriam Murphy or to Mrs Ann Harnedy (Deputy DLP) for Care Team monitoring. The DLP Mr Aiden O'Brien will be notified at the commencement of monitoring of a child. Disclosures are reported to the Mr. Aiden O'Brien (DLP).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a "need to know" basis.

School procedures already in place and new procedures and good practice being put in place will be examined with reference to the Children First – National Guidance and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools and any Child Protection issues that may arise will be addressed. The following areas have been considered by the staff and board of management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the staff and board of management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

➤ **Physical Contact:**

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 it's 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.

➤ **Visitors / Guest Speakers:**

Visitors/guest speakers should never be left in sole charge of pupils. The school (principal/teachers) has a responsibility to be satisfied as to the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests 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 staffs 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 must be present. Children will be supplied with new underwear and parents will be asked to replace any clothing given to their child. Parents will be informed of this procedure at meeting for

new parents. A record of all such incidents will be kept by the class teacher and parents will be notified.

➤ **One to One teaching:**

It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an environment where teachers and pupils are visible to others e.g. inside the glass panel of classroom door. In the event of there being no glass panel the door must remain open. 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 areas and with the consent of parents. Under no circumstances will unaccompanied members of staff/volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child. In such situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child. 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 principal and parents.

➤ **Supervision:**

School supervision policy will be followed by staff members, including Principal/Deputy Principal to ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children at all breaks and before and after school. Each staff member has an individual copy of the supervision rota which is revised annually. Teachers will ensure that children are visible in the school yard. Children are not allowed to spend time in classrooms, toilets or other rooms unless under adult supervision. They are not to leave the schoolyard or to engage with adults who are outside of the schoolyard.

See supervision policy for agreed rules and procedures around break times.

➤ **Behaviour:**

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play cooperatively 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 accordingly. Bullying behaviour will be addressed under our anti bullying policy.

➤ **Visitors:**

All visitors are asked to report to the office on arrival at the school and to wear a visitor's badge. Staff members will be aware of any visitors entering the school grounds and will ascertain their intentions. They will be supervised in the discharge of their

business, in so far as is practicable. The main gate and side gate will remain closed during the school day. CCTV cameras have been installed at various locations in the school grounds. If children have to be collected from the school for any reason it will be necessary to have them signed out at the office. If for any reason that the office is closed, alternative arrangements will be made so as to facilitate the signing out process.

➤ **Accidents:**

While every precaution will be taken under our health and safety statement to ensure the safety of our children, we realise that accidents will happen. Accidents will be recorded in our incident books and will be addressed under our accident policy as part of health and safety.

➤ **Children Travelling in Staff Cars:**

The practice of children travelling in teacher's cars will be discouraged however in the event of an emergency children need to be accompanied by another child or adult when travelling in a teacher's car.

➤ **Record Keeping:**

Teachers will keep each child's file updated with the results of assessments carried out, family contact details and any other relevant information. The records are kept in central filing cabinets and on the Aladdin Information Management System. Roll books are updated daily. Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need to know basis.

➤ **Care Team:**

A monitoring system is in operation in the school coordinated by Ms Miriam Murphy as part of her Assistant Principal post.

Teachers inform Mrs Harnedy, Deputy Principal, or Ms Murphy of any concerns they might have in relation to the well-being of a child in their class. The teacher is then given a Monitoring Form where they record their observations in a clear factual fashion. The DLP is informed when monitoring commences. Any observations are signed and dated.

As a result of this monitoring process and based on the evidence gathered over a two to three week period a child may be referred to the Care Team for its consideration.

Monitoring continues even if it is deemed unnecessary to refer to the Care Team at that juncture. Ms. Murphy receives a report on each child being monitored at the end of each term.

It is the decision of The Care Team, in consultation with the relevant staff members to close a file on a child.

Each child on our Monitoring List or Care Team List is identified by number to ensure confidentiality.

The Principal, Deputy Principal, and Ms. Murphy form the core of the Care Team and attend all meetings. Other personnel e.g. class teacher, S.E.T, S.N.A, who are dealing with a particular child, attend meetings as deemed necessary.

Procedures relating to the Care Team system in the school are relayed to the whole teaching staff at regular staff meetings and particularly at the beginning of each school year.

How to handle disclosures from children:

1. An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and a staff member may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. Great care should be taken not to break that trust.
2. When information is offered in confidence, the staff member will need tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The staff member will need to reassure the child and retain his/her trust, while explaining the need for action and possible consequences, which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to support and protect him/her, but don't make promises that cannot be kept.
3. While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, the following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child does make a disclosure:
 - Listen to the child
 - DO NOT ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child
 - Offer reassurance but do not make promises
 - Do not stop a child recalling significant events
 - Do not over react
 - Explain that further help may have to be sought
 - Record the discussion accurately and retain the record.

The procedure to be followed by the staff of our school in monitoring a suspected abuse case is:

1. Do not use the child's name when recording the incident; use their school registration number.
2. Record carefully all information you have noticed or gathered into a confidential notebook that is to be kept in a safe place. If a child makes a disclosure to you make sure you write down as soon as you can what was said. Include direct quotes from the child and sketches of any markings you may have noticed. Make sure you sign and date each entry at the end of the entry. (National Guidance Chapter 2 Paragraph 2.7.6).
3. Report your concerns confidentially to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).
4. If the DLP is also concerned he/ she will phone the duty social worker on call for confidential, anonymous advice. Pages 37,38 of the guidelines give the procedure to be followed.

5. The advice from them will either be to continue monitoring the situation or to make a formal report. Write down the date and time of the call and the advice given.
6. The DLP will give the concerned teacher a written statement of the advice given. The teacher will write all meetings and subsequent recommendations into the notebook.
7. If a member of staff is not happy with the advice given by the DLP he/she is entitled to go over the DLP's head and phone the duty social officer anonymously him/herself.

When a DLP is informed of a suspicion or allegation of abuse he/ she will:

1. If satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion he/she should report the matter to the HSE
 2. In the event of an emergency or the non-availability of HSE staff the report should be made to An Garda Síochána
 3. In cases where the school personnel have concerns about a child but not sure whether to report the matter, advice should be sought. The DLP should consult with the social worker on duty and be explicit that he/she is requesting advice and not making a report. If the HSE advises that a referral should be made, the DLP should act on this advice
 4. The Standard Report Form (Appendix 3 National Guidance) for reporting child welfare and protection concerns to the HSE should be used when reporting child protection and welfare concerns to the HSE Children and Family Services.
 5. Before submitting a report to the HSE it is recommended that the DLP should inform the parents/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the child. A decision for not doing so should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so
 6. If the DLP decides not to refer the concerns of the school employee to the HSE the employee should receive a written statement as to the reasons why action is not being taken. The employee should also be advised that if he/she is still concerned about the situation he/she is free to consult with or report to the HSE. See Appendix 2 National Guidance or through HSE LoCall tel. 1850 241850.
 7. In cases where an allegation of abuse is made against a school employee the procedures laid out in Chapter 5 of Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (pages 30 to 34) will be followed in their entirety.
- Remember information cannot be unheard.
 - Remember it is not the school's job to investigate a situation; it is the HSEs.

- The 'Protections for Persons Reporting Abuse Act', 1998 makes a provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of HSEs or any member of the Garda Síochána. National Guidance Chapter 3 Page 16.

The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols and practices as appropriate are in place in respect 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.

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

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on: 28th January 2013

Signed: _____

Mr John Drinan,
Chairperson of Board of Management.

Signed: _____

Mr Aiden O'Brien,
Principal

Date of next review: January 2014