

Scoil Naomh Caitríona, Child Protection Policy

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.

Therefore, 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 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 the Principal
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is the Deputy Principal
4. Scoil Naomh Caitríona 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.

An individual copy of this policy document and a copy of **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children** from The Department of Children and Youth Affairs will be made available to all staff.

It is incumbent on all staff to familiarize themselves with 'Children First' and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

Aims of this policy:

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment
- Provide a personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for all children in the school
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection amongst the whole school community
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children and staff
- Ensure that all staff members including new staff are aware of and familiar with the 'Children First' and the DES guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse.

Prevention

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the schools' SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection. All Teachers sign a declaration for the BoM in September and June each year confirming that the programme has been taught in their classroom.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught every year. In Scoil Naomh Caitríona we divide the two year programme evenly between Junior and Senior Infants, 1st and 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 5th and 6th.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

- The Stay Safe Programme will be taught in a two-year cycle.
- On specific recommendation in a psychological report of a child with SEN, the Resource teacher will support the RSE and Stay Safe programmes with suitable material.
- Information meetings for parents may be held at various times to clarify and discuss any of the issues within the RSE or Stay Safe programme.
- In all cases parents will be notified in advance of the content of the RSE programme. Parents will be encouraged to sign and discuss materials sent home pertaining to the programmes.

Procedures:

All staff, (Teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc.) in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in ‘Children First: National Guidance for the protection and Welfare of Children’.

In any disclosure the exact words used by the child will be recorded, when possible.

(See: Section 2 of the Child Protection Guidelines. DES: 2001)

The Board of Management of this school has appointed **Claire O’Donovan** as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the deputy DLP.

The staff and management of this school have agreed:

- All concerns/ disclosures involving child protection/child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where appropriate).
- Each written 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.

5. Specific policies named hereunder are key elements of this overall document and must be referred to in the context of this policy. The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate, are in place in respect of these listed policies.

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| • Critical Incidents | Data Protection |
| • Enrolment | Acceptable Usage Policy |
| • Code of Behaviour | Supervision |
| • Anti- Bullying | SEN |
| • Health and Safety | |

This policy will also be considered, with reference to the following:

- Accidents including Toileting accidents
- Attendance
- Transporting
- Sporting Activities
- Record Keeping
- Staff Induction
- Visitors

Accidents:

While every precaution will be taken under our Health and Safety Policy to ensure the safety of children, it is accepted that accidents will happen. At Break Times, children who suffer significant injuries are attended to by the Special Needs Assistants on duty. The nature and extent of the injury and treatment applied is noted in the First Aid Log. If deemed necessary, a text message will be sent for the attention of her parent(s). If deemed necessary, direct contact will be made with the child's parents. If warranted, the school may seek and avail of immediate medical assistance for the child.

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 should be present.

A record of all such incidents will be kept and principal and parents will be notified.

Attendance

Scoil Naomh Caitriona complies with the Education Welfare Act 2000 by furnishing of reports to the Education Welfare Officer regarding non-attendance or poor attendance. The school also monitors any correlation observed between non-attendance and signs of neglect and/or abuse.

Transportation

In the normal course of events, members of the school staff will not carry pupils in their cars, and should do so only in cases of emergency. In this event, another staff member should travel in the car also. However we recognise that this is not always practicable in a medical emergency situation.

Sporting Activities: Games/ PE/ Swimming

Children will be brought by bus to the swimming pool. Pupils are advised regarding appropriate behaviour in the dressing room areas and in the swimming pool. Teachers/SNAs will be present to exercise supervision of the pupils at/near the dressing rooms. It may be necessary for teachers/SNAs to enter the dressing rooms in order to exercise their supervisory duties.

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 members of staff/ volunteers be expected to or allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child.

At all times there will be adequate supervision of pupils.

Record Keeping

- Sensitive information regarding children will be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- Official pupils' files are stored securely in filing cabinets in the Secretary's Office
- Student records are held in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal's office.
- SEN files are stored in locked filing cabinets in the Principal's office.
- All files of pupils who no longer attend this school are stored securely in the records room.

Regarding child protection matters, the DLP will maintain proper records which will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and will take the necessary measures to ensure that the confidentiality of the records is maintained.

Induction of Staff

- The DLP will be responsible for informing all new staff members of the 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (Dept. of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011) and with 'Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools' (DES, 2011).
- The DLP will make available a copy of the 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (Dept. of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011) and with 'Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools' (DES, 2011) and this Child Protection Policy to all new staff.
- All teachers are expected to teach the relevant SPHE objectives (including Stay Safe and RSE Programmes) for their class and newly appointed teachers in particular will be made aware of this responsibility. They will also be given the Declaration Form for the BoM (Appendix 4).

Visitors

Staff members on playground duty will be aware of visitors entering the school playground and will ascertain their intentions. Staff members will be vigilant of strangers/visitors entering the school grounds/premises. All visitors are required by the Board of Management to report to the Secretary's Office on entering the school. All visitors must complete the Visitors Log Book and wear Admission Badges, 'Cuariteoir', for the duration of their visit. Parents calling with school lunches or other requirements for their children will be asked to leave these at the Secretary's Office for collection by their child.

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.

Appendix 1: Scoil Naomh Caitríona, Child Protection Procedures

Checklist for School Employees

Designated Liaison Person: Principal

Deputy DLP: Deputy Principal

If a child discloses information to you:-

- Listen
- Do not ask leading questions
- Offer reassurance but do not promise not to tell
- Explain that other adults may need to be told - DLP
- Do not stop the child speaking
- Do not over react or comment
- Inform DLP - If you have a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern that a child is at risk or has suffered abuse, the DLP should contact the Health Board for advice
- At the earliest opportunity, record accurately what the child has said – Using the child's own words. Record date/time and context of the disclosure. Use child's registration number – Not child's name
- Facts only
- Sketch signs of physical injury if appropriate
- Retain records for a period of 21 years

The following should also be reported to the DLP:

- An account from a person who saw a child being abused
- Injury consistent with abuse
- Dysfunctional behaviour
- Implausible explanations for injury or behaviour
- Consistent evidence over a period of time that a child is being emotionally or physically neglected

HSE/SWD Response:

- School is asked to monitor the situation
- Formal report is requested, sent by DLP and on receipt case is allocated to Social Worker
- Preliminary enquiry – Screening process
- Initial assessment

Possible outcomes:

- Case closed
- Family support
- Child Protection Plan (usually following a case conference).

Appendix 2:

Excerpt from 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and post-Primary Schools' (DES, 2011).

3.5 Dealing with disclosures from children

3.5.1 An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and a member of staff may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. Great care shall be taken not to damage that trust.

3.5.2 When information is offered in confidence, the member of staff will need tact and sensitivity in responding to the disclosure. The member of staff will need to reassure the child, and endeavour to retain his or her trust, while explaining the need for action which will necessarily involve other adults being informed. It is important to tell the child that everything possible will be done to protect and support him/her, but not to make promises that cannot be kept e.g. promising not to tell anyone else.

3.5.3 It is important to deal with any allegation of abuse or neglect in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened. While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, the following advice is offered to school personnel to whom a child makes a disclosure of abuse.

- (a) It is important to stay calm and not to show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously;
- (b) It should be understood that the child has decided to tell about something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved;
- (c) The child should understand that it is not possible that any information will be kept a secret;
- (d) No judgmental statement should be made about the person against whom the allegation is made;
- (e) The child should not be questioned unless the nature of what he/she is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that?"
- (f) The child should be given some indication of what would happen next, such as informing the Designated Liaison Person, parents/carers, HSE or possibly An Garda Síochána. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage;
- (g) Record the disclosure immediately."

**Appendix 3:
Protocol Authorising Immediate Action**

5.2.1 Employers should have in place a written protocol for authorising immediate action when there is a requirement for a staff member to be put on administrative leave.The principles of natural justice, the presumption of innocence and fair procedures shall be adhered to. It is very important to note that the actions described here are intended to be precautionary and not disciplinary.

5.2.2 Where the protocol is invoked to absent an employee from the school an emergency meeting of the Board of Management and/or the VEC as appropriate shall be convened’.

Protocol authorising immediate action

The following protocol authorises immediate action under section 5.2 of the ‘Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools’.

Primary

In the context of these procedures, where circumstances warrant it, as a precautionary measure in order to protect the children in the school and in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the presumption of innocence, the chairperson of the Board of Management is authorised by the school authority to direct an employee to immediately absent himself/herself from the school without loss of pay until the matter has been considered by the employer.

The employee will be invited to a meeting with the chairperson, the purpose of which is to inform the employee of the allegation and the action being taken. The employee may be accompanied by an appropriate person of his or her choice and will be so advised.

In any event, the employee will also be advised of the matter, in writing.